

**BUNNY, HOUND
AND CLOWN**

BUNNY, HOUND AND CLOWN

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI *has written:*

THE CHIEF OF THE HERD

GAY NECK. *Awarded the Newbery Medal,
1927.*

(Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. Selected
as one of the best illustrated books of 1927
by the American Institute of Graphic Arts.)

GHOND THE HUNTER

(Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. Selected
as one of the best illustrated books of 1928
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KARI, THE ELEPHANT

JUNGLE BEASTS AND MEN

HARI, THE JUNGLE LAD

HINDU FABLES

Published by E. P. DUTTON & Co., Inc.

BY

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

AUTHOR OF "THE CHIEF OF THE HERD," "GAY NECK,"
"GHOND THE HUNTER," "HARI, THE JUNGLE LAD," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
KURT WIESE



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FIRST EDITION

Dedicated to
DEBI AND SHAKUNTALA CHATTOPADHAYA

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INTRODUCTION

THE book I love most, and have dedicated to my mother, is "Hindu Fables," more than one of which I heard from her own lips. Because it is the simplest of my works I dedicated it to her memory.

I am using the word "memory" as a matter of form; for to my own conviction her death could not have and has not interrupted her existence. My religion teaches and guarantees that birth and death are garments put on by the soul. The soul never dies.

The little "Hindu Fables" I told in English to my mother's grandson who was born in America. My boy heard them again and again until he was seven. By that time they had become clear enough to deserve being set down in writing.

This transcribing Hindu cradle-tales from Indian folk-speech into modern English is an arduous task, if not an insoluble problem. First of all, today there is hardly any current folk-speech in the English language outside of slang. In the time of Queen Elizabeth, the folk-language of Britain must have been wonderful. India, who still lingers in the Seventeenth Century, has a marvellous common-speech. If in

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manufacture the English-speaking world has moved on from the hand-loom to industrialism, in the matter of story-telling it has passed from folk-lore to slang and realistic fiction.

On the contrary, in Hindusthan we are still trying to preserve the spinning wheel, and folk-utterance. Now, as a translator of my people's matchless speech I had a hard time discovering in the English of our Twentieth Century folk an idiom picturesque and direct enough to convey the very simple art of the Orient. Slang is too direct. The so-called picturesque English prevalent in the Senate and the Congress is too involved. At last, worried almost to despair, I tried to invent an arrangement of words that would translate at least a bulk of the grace and directness of my native tongue. My solution of this problem has been the chief preoccupation of all my works.

There was another thing that I had in mind, too: namely, to convey the wisdom of life that Indians are taught by parents through folk-tales. You will notice in my "Fables" two kinds of morals stressed. The first is a useful every-day business moral, and the second is the transcendental morality through which men find God. The former stresses the science of surviving in our struggle against the unfair bully and the brute. The latter insists that after we have overcome a conscienceless adversary we must eliminate all materialism from our lives and make an effort to find God.

What has been made explicit in the "Fables" remains im-

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PLICIT in all the other books. In every one of my books hides a lesson. "Kari, the Elephant" is the history of a practical, as well as spiritual, relationship that a Hindu is taught to establish between man and the four-footed beasts.

"Hari, the Jungle Lad" contains the statement that man must understand and reverence all nature. He must not admit any conflict between nature and civilization. In order to achieve this end, I had to fall back on many persons' experiences with which "Hari, the Jungle Lad" is replete.

Now we come to "Gay Neck" which some people call my best work. Most of it is a record of my experiences with about forty pigeons and their leader. Alas, as I went on writing the book I had to go beyond my experiences, and had to draw upon those of the trainers of army pigeons. Anyway, the message implicit in the book is that man and the winged animals are brothers.

The work that I consider the most valuable juvenile book that I have written is "Ghond the Hunter." In it I have sought to render the inmost things of Hindu life into English. It has been the ambition of my life to put into the hands of American boys and girls about sixteen years old a document that will portray the living soul of a Hindu boy. I hope boys and girls between sixteen and eighteen can be persuaded to read "Ghond the Hunter."

Last of all, "The Chief of the Herd." How did I think of it? An American friend suggested the central idea of the book.

Then as I meditated on it, from day to day the Hindu ideal of a leader and leadership thrust itself to the foreground. At this stage a third thing entered the story of the Chief. This turned out to be the most important matter in the book. In fact, it is so important that I must discuss it at length.

Today in America we are eager to train a generation of leaders. America must produce titanic men and women who will leave their imprints on the pages of Art, Philosophy, Religion and Science. We should plan to rear a generation who will lead us towards those heights. At this writing I feel as if I discern the faces of a coming group of leaders among the children who are playing in the prairies, in the cities, and in the mountains of North America. To them I am sending out the story of Sirdar in "The Chief of the Herd" in order to suggest to them what the life of a leader is in the jungle, that laboratory of Nature where she has solved that problem. They should know the ideals and habits that go to make a natural leader. A holy man of modern India has said, "Character is the sum total of habits." The habits that our children are forming today will largely determine the character of their leadership tomorrow.

I am afraid "The Chief of the Herd" is an ambitious book. It does aim to speak of leadership to boys and girls of any age between seven and seventeen. Whether the book has missed its mark, I shall leave to my young friends to decide.

In the meantime, let me repeat that behind each one of

my books the reader will discover a moral. I believe that there is no point in writing for the young, if one has no ethical convictions to set forth before them. We, their elders, must sincerely express our conclusions both moral and spiritual before the young. To examine and appreciate our ideals is one of their rights.

Any worth-while work of art, whether the Buddhist Jataka Tales or Aesop's Fables, each group, was composed by ancient story-tellers in order to "teach the wise conduct of life" to the boys and girls, as well as to the adults of their time. What nobler example can we moderns follow than the ones set forth by the teachers of Greece and India?

Art for art's sake, stories without morals can be the ideals of those who do not take the craft of juvenile story-writing seriously. Children of every race want to hear and examine morals, provided they come out of a story as simply as fruits from a living tree.

In recent months I have received letters from India about the decline of story-reading among the young. Not only that, one correspondent has gone so far as to intimate that India has no juvenile literature. What a statement in a country of the Jatakas, the Panchatantra, and the Katha! India has the largest body of juvenile literature in the world. In my childhood I heard a great many tales from my elders of which later in an American University a Sanskritist identified the source: it was the Katha Sarit Sagara. He was amazed at the fund of

Sanskrit lore that I carried under my skull. Now seeing that the true psychological moment had arrived I described to him the exact way I had heard the stories in a Bengali home. Need I say that this amazed him all the more.

Because our tales have been preserved orally, no literary man thinks of calling it literature, which is not its fault. At a single glance one can see that some of the very best literature of many lands has come down to us by word of mouth. Untold generations have memorised and chanted the Rig and other Vedas. Homer's epics were recited from memory centuries before they were committed to writing. In Southern India even to this day one hears the Sanskrit Ramayana chanted by girls of good families. As for the Ramayana of Tulsidas one can hear all of it many times over from different persons in Northern India.

Like the priceless gems already mentioned the best juvenile stories have been orally preserved in India. There one can find innumerable children who cannot read and write yet; they have heard and memorised the fables of the Hitopodesha, the Indian model for La Fontaine, and many of the Jatakas, the Indian equivalent of Aesop and the Biblical parables in one.

It is better to teach the young the tales by word of mouth than to make them read mediocre stories written by the so called modern juvenile-artists. These men resemble genius in nothing but their fecundity.

In the province of Bengal, which I know most intimately, a child hears stories from three kinds of story-tellers. His nurse and his mother begin the process at home. Elders known and unknown to the young can frequently be seen telling stories under the shelter of a vast banyan. Then there are the Kathakas of the temples and the minstrels in the streets. In my own case all my knowledge and my ability to recite from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two of the greatest epics of mankind, I owe to those three sources. My inference is that because stories were told to me, I in turn developed the habit of story-telling.

The art of story-telling which is the predecessor of story-writing comes from the East. The travel of Indian fables to Europe and the rest of the world has been conceded by all competent scholars. Take the "five Tantras": it is said the Panchatantra has been translated into more alien tongues than Shakespeare.

Let us not forget that the fables called Panchatantra are told by parents, friends, and teachers in India to the young. Very few of us read them.

About four years ago when Professor Arthur Ryder brought out his new translation of the Panchatantra for the young of the United States of America the demand for it exceeded more than a dozen editions in one winter. In passing I might add that Ryder's is the only translation that carries over into English the poetry and excellence of the original.

BUNNY, HOUND
AND CLOWN



I

A GREEDY BEE

IN INDIA all bees are called Madhukara, Honeygiver. But the little bee whose adventures we are to witness here was called Lobhi by the hive to which she belonged. But why Lobhi? Because she was very greedy. Since that was her character they called her Greedy, Lobhi.

Since even the smallest person can grow better through what happens to him or her we shall soon learn how Lobhi gave up being greedy.

It happened just after the rain had fallen. In the hot climate of India after the dry spring, when the rains come they destroy all sweet blossoms in the woods. This drives the bees far out of the jungle in quest of food.

Lobhi's first experience of the rainy season proved not at

all different from what it had been for millions of generations of bees before her. With the coming of the long rain, she followed the example of the others; after taking shelter in the warmest part of the hive, she waited for the weather to clear. Of course, she had work to do which kept her mind from thinking of the gloom woven and rewoven by the exhaustless



Then she went in quest of fresh honey

rain. Hour after hour, day after day, for nearly a week the jungle hummed with the drumming of rain.

Not an animal dared to go out. Even the fierce tiger crouched in his lair, held spellbound by the terrifying torrents.

Though the claws of the pouring water cut at the roots of the trees and the hills with great deal of noise, yet the jungle-folks felt the silence of it, as if layer upon layer of

silence like wet cotton was pressed upon their hearing. All of them were stricken with awe. Even the smallest bee felt it. Unlike human beings, they did not cry for food; nor did they grow restless with thirst. Their instinct told them that it would be over in time, and they must wait till then.

At last after the seventh day, the water stopped pouring. A breeze full of the faint odour of something far off roused Lobhi, the youngest bee. No sooner had she been roused, than she went in quest of fresh honey. The sound of her flight drew other bees after her. Thus in a trice the whole hive was emptied.

No matter where Lobhi and her friends flew they found the forest not only wet but blossomless. The rain falling drop by drop had knocked all the sweet Sala blossoms off their boughs. Almonds, and Oleander too, were flowerless. Goaded by hunger from within Lobhi buzzed frantically for food.

Just when the pangs of hunger had grown to the acutest, she again smelt the strange odour in the breeze. She nosed the air anew. The same strange fragrance. One, two, ha, now she knew without being told what it was. Her bee-instinct drew her towards the lotus-lake outside the forest. She hummed to her friends. They too had tasted the fragrant air; they too were wild for the lotus-honey, the most delicate in the world. Led by her, they made for the open in search of the lake.

But where was this body of water? Just outside the jungle

in the direction of the wind. It was not easy to fly against it in the open. Lobhi did not care about that. She was so hungry and greedy that she was very reckless.

It did not take them long to come out of the jungle. . . . Now a most beautiful sight greeted their eyes. Several hundred feet ahead lay the water thickly covered with red, blue, and gold lotuses. Where there had been nothing but a shallow



Lobhi undaunted, braved the gale

swamp, now appeared a deep lake covered with honey-laden blossoms.

Naturally the wind blew very strong in the open country. All the same they flew against it in order to lay siege to the flower-cups whence rose the odour of honey. But the wind was so stiff that all the bees except one were beaten back to their forest home. Lobhi, undaunted, braved the gale. She tacked like a ship on a stormy sea: now to the right, now to left,

making some headway all the time. Every few minutes she settled on a blade of grass in order to rest her tired wings. But no sooner had she renewed her strength than she resumed her flight. She passed many strange places, but she did not care to look at them today. Paying attention to nothing but the breeze, drawn by the odour coming from the lake which now she could glimpse, *on* she flew. On and on, she went tacking, diving and tumbling.

At last Lobhi reached the edge of the lake. Here the wind hit her wings hard, almost breaking them. Luckily she tumbled like a tumbler pigeon and came down on a tasselled sedge. Sitting on its swaying crest, she glanced at the lake. By their colours she could very easily tell the blue and the white lotuses.

The bees love the honey of the blue and the white lotuses the most. That is why they go for these at first sight. By now, not only the colours but the honeyed breath of the blossoms had gripped her so that Lobhi flew against the harsh wind. It nearly knocked and drowned her; but the love for honey was so strong in her that she flew fast, just a hair's breadth above the troubled water.

At last she sighted a blood-red lotus right under her. As if sucked down by its heavy fragrance, she dove into its heart. There she buried herself in the cup of honey. How sweet the first taste of fresh honey! Its savour sent a thrill through her hungry body. Her very wings trembled with pleasure.

After having satisfied her hunger, she waited for the breeze to die down, and as the day grew hot with the sun reaching the center of the sky, she decided to lie down inside



She decided to lie down inside the cup

the cup whose honey had made her feel happy and numb with sleep.

When after her nap she opened her eyes, she felt hungry again. Though it was late afternoon, and though it was very dangerous for her to tarry much longer, Lobhi flitted from

flower to flower, tasting the nectar hidden in its heart. Though she was wise enough to sip very little each time she was overcome by her greed for more.

The sun was setting by now. Here and there lotuses were closing their petals. But heedless of all such signs of real danger, she kept on tasting honey.

As if fate had laid a trap for her, suddenly she came upon a lotus whose petals were white as the Himalayas. From its cup oozed the fragrance of Maha Padma—sweeter than sweetness itself.

The very first breath of it seemed to make her body too heavy for flight. Her wings lagged. Then the breeze struck her. In order to avoid falling into the lake she alighted on the lotus brimming over with the most exquisite honey. The sweetness of it made her forget the oncoming night hinted by the slow trembling of the petals of the flower itself. Lobhi drank and drank of the honey. She hardly remembered the fact that the moment the sun goes out of sight the lotuses close their petals.

Her greed proved too strong for her. Night spread darkness abroad. Stillness rose from the lake like a prayer to God. Far off a bullfrog twanged his deep note of warning. Alas, Lobhi heeded him not.

Honey-eating, honey-breathing, and honey-mad, she could not feel, hear, nor see that the death-white petals of the

flower were closing on her. Like slabs of heavy marble, petal after petal slid shut. Without the slightest wish to struggle out of her slowly closing tomb, she lay there eating honey. The last white petal moved and shut off the least breath of air.



And shut off the least breath of air

Suddenly Lobhi came out of her stupor. For, lo, she was not able to breathe except with great difficulty. It seemed as though there was nothing but choking honey everywhere. No matter whither she turned for escape she faced only a smothering darkness.

Now the exact meaning of her situation dawned upon Lobhi. Frantically she beat her wings against the marble petals. With heartbreaking fury she flung herself hither and thither. Thinking that her friends, other bees, might be outside, she hummed loudly for them to open the white doors and release her, but nothing answered her call. Only the silent pollen shivered and fell about her. At last, realising that her escape was cut off and death so very near, she gave up the struggle.

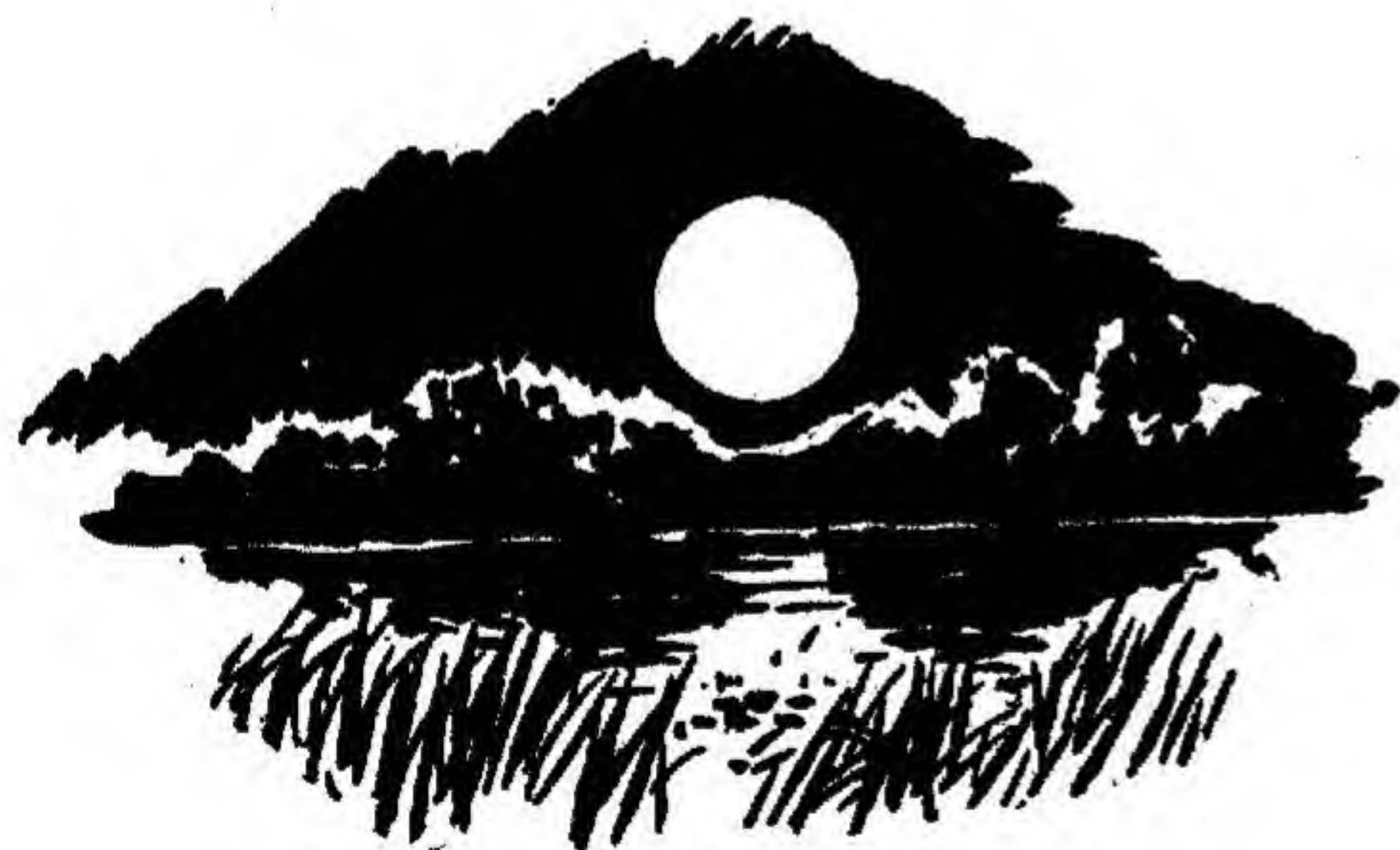
Now she had no more air to breathe. A cold airless world pressed and pressed upon her. It seemed to push her from Life into Death.

As a sleeper dreaming of death wakes into life, when she opened her eyes again Lobhi found herself wrapped in shrouds of white. Whiteness of the purest crystal wove and rewove the silence that held her. Where was she—among the living or with the dead? She began to breathe—air! Yes, it was air that she drew into herself. Now she began to walk, very slowly. She trampled on pollen. Moving further on she seemed to reach the upper air. Now what she saw stunned her senses. . . .

Lotus upon lotus lay with drooping heads in the water, save a few. These, the white ones, had opened their hearts into which the moon poured her radiance. Every flower seemed to drink it in with the eagerness of a thirsty bee. Now Lobhi realised to whom she owed her life. Had not the moon

risen in time, and had not the lotus opened its heart to the moon's light, our little bee would have been dead by now.

The next day when the other bees flew over the lake in search for her they rejoiced to find Lobhi alive, seated on a snow-shaming white lotus. Though there still lay a lot of the most excellent honey in the flower, Lobhi turned away from it. She said to her friends: "I have learnt the lesson of my life. I will not be greedy any more."



II

THE MONGOOSE WHO SAVED THE LIFE OF A BABY

JUST at the end of winter Benji, the Mongoose, came to the family of Varna, the baby. When the little animal, very much like a grey squirrel, decided to make his home with the parents of the new-born Varna, colour, his father and mother said: "Our child's soul must have known the soul of Benji, the Mongoose, in Heaven. That is why from nowhere, which is the other name of Heaven, he, the little animal, has come here to keep him company."

In India it is not considered unusual to have a wild animal visit Man in order to make its home with him. And if a mongoose be the animal, the human beings take it as great good fortune. For, as you know, every mongoose is a mortal enemy of all poisonous snakes.

The parents of Varna had the greater reason to be happy

because their gardens at springtime attracted a good many vipers. Now that winter had drawn to its end, the snakes were expected to come out of their winter's sleep.

Behold, the usual spring drought set in, drying up brooks, lakes, and rivers, and since it was time to garner the harvest of early summer, the parents of Varna had to go out leaving the



The animal generally stayed in the house

baby asleep in his basket in the cool of their home. This they were able to do without the slightest fear, because by now his Mongoose friend had given up his shyness and began to go in and out of the house as if he too were a dweller under its roof. The animal generally stayed in the house when Varna kept quiet. But whenever he cried, in order not to hear his yells, Benji ran out of the building, fast as his squirrel-swift feet would carry him. He never could endure the lad's lusty

voice. Nor did he see any sense in its frequent rise from octave to octave.

One hot morning after feeding him, when his parents had left him in his basket near which Benji stood guard, suddenly for no reason the infant began to cry. Benji instead of enduring it like a soldier at his post fled the spot at once, and stayed away a long time.

In fact, he forgot all about the baby for the time being. Now that the midday had come, the hedges of the garden had withdrawn their small shadow from where he loafed. The open spaces were not pleasanter than the house ringing with Varna's crying. . . .

But instead of noises only silence greeted his ears every step that he took towards it. Of course, that pleased him all the more. He went faster and faster across the hot lawn where the drought had turned everything the colour of copper. Skipping over the stone steps he reached the front porch. Lo, as he stopped to feel the coolness of the shadow under the projecting roof he saw something inside the drawing-room that made him bristle. What was this? He looked most intently at the sight before him.

"How can it be true?" he seemed to say to himself. "No, it can't."

But his eyes told him that it was true. It was his fault, too, that this thing had happened. What must he do now . . . now that it was probably too late?

But animals are not used to long reasoning. So before another ten seconds had passed he had dashed into the house swiftly.

This was a great mistake. Despite his soft feet, "the gust of his coming" had roused the snake. Now by its risen body



Benji knew that he had met King Cobra

and opening hood, Benji knew that he had met King Cobra, the mortal foe of his race.

How the cobra had crawled into the house and across its cool cement floor till it had reached the sleeping infant's basket, Benji could never know. But his instinct told him that if he was not quick enough the snake, in order to get away from him, might crawl inside Varna's basket. The child in the

meantime gave no sign whether he was alive. This made his friend all the more troubled.

Troubled though he was, Benji went at the snake. The cobra raised himself higher, coiling himself tighter around the basket; then struck at the mongoose. But ere his poison-



... just in time

fangs could reach his victim's skin through its thick coat, Benji had passed to the other side of the room, brushing against the basket. The snake raised himself again, his mouth full of some grey hair. But instead of the mongoose coming at him again he felt that something had moved inside the basket. Could it be another mongoose? But he dared not look there, for he heard Benji moving. He turned to glance. Benji

was looking, alert as a hawk watching a pigeon. Had the cobra the gift of mind reading? He somehow learned that his opponent was worried about the object in the basket. But, stupid as all serpents are, instead of facing his enemy squarely, he also tried to keep an eye on the basket. This weakened his defence. Sensing this truth, Benji forgot all about Varna and



His jaws gripped the cobra's neck

moved to attack the snake. Each time he came nearer, swift as a lash the snake tried to fall on him. But he never could reach the mongoose again. Benji slipped away—just in time.

Hissing and foaming with wrath the snake charged whenever his enemy drew near. Though it tired him, he never let a single feint of Benji pass without a counter stroke.

Both of them had grown careless by now. The snake's

noises were augmented by the patter of Benji's feet. That added to the tension in the air, rousing the sleeping Varna. He began to cry. It frightened the snake. Now seeing something move violently inside the basket, he swiftly turned his hood away from the mongoose and aimed at the baby.

For Benji now the crucial point had been reached. Ere the cobra's head had gone a hair's breadth down into the child's basket, Benji leaped into the air, and made for the serpent's neck, his mouth opened, his white teeth flashing. Before his heart had beaten twice more, his jaws gripped the cobra's neck.

Now, after knocking the basket almost over, both of them rolled on the floor of the room—the snake's tail lashing the air and beating the floor in turn, the mongoose rolling over and over, his little body unable to bear the weight and force of his foe's movements.

But through all this his jaws never relaxed. Though the corners of his mouth hurt, his head banged against the floor more than once, and his jaws ached, he never let go of the cobra.

It seemed that he would have held on forever had he not suddenly heard the child yell for its mother. This made him furious. He bit harder—through the snake's spinal cord, at last . . . just then Varna pushed an ear-splitting cry into the air. That settled it. Before the boy's next yell, Benji had

dropped the snake and fled the spot. Fortunately for the infant the cobra was dead now.

His cries brought home his father and mother. And when they witnessed the deed of mercy the mongoose had done, they fell on their knees to thank God, the Maker of mongoose and man.



III

DOG OF PARADISE

(This Story Is Very Ancient)

IN THE beginning, after God had made Heaven and Earth He had a sign placed at the entrance of the former. It read thus: "Dogs are not permitted."

Later on, owing to the good deeds of a noble hound the forbidding sign was removed. This happened thousands of years ago when India was ruled by a King who loved dogs. He was called Dharma, Right. This title was given him, because in all his eighty years on earth he had done no wrong and ruled his subjects as a loving father rules his children.

Because he was a man who had thought the right, spoken the right, done the right, and dreamt the right, the gods sent him word from Heaven that he should try to reach God's

presence not only with his soul but also with his body. This no doubt is the highest honour any being could covet. For no person had ever entered Heaven in his human frame.

After receiving the message Dharma said to his Queen, "This is strange. I have always heard that only souls of crea-



tures at the death of their bodies go to live with God. Behold, I am informed to try entering His Presence in this mortal vesture, my body."

The Queen answered: "May I go with you? If I am good as you, I too might enter there as I am."

Dharma's four brothers when they had heard of it also said, "Let us all try. Who knows how good each one of us is at

heart? In any case there is no harm trying. We too might be found perfect like our brother."

So they all made their plans for the final journey. It was not an easy thing to plan, for their path lay through the frozen Himalayas, whose peaks are the steps to the Gates of Heaven. As you know, no mortal has yet trodden the topmost heights of those mountains. There the snows never melt, and the air no mortal can breathe.

Before starting, the King asked his very best friend to go with him. Whom do you think he called his best friend? Naturally, it was his old dog. But the dog protested, "I am willing to go wherever you lead, but entering Heaven in this mortal body of mine sounds too absurd. I can swear that I have been faithful to my master with my body and mind. But I do not know that I am holy enough to have acted, spoken, and thought Right all my life. What is the use of my trying to tread the bleak Himalayas? You know that I shall die before I get through their cold foothills. I had better not try to enter Paradise."

The King said, "I cannot go without you."

The dog said, "That settles it. Let us start. I go wherever you order me."

After patting the hound on the head with his lotus-hands, Dharma called to his wife and brothers to start. . . . Then a voice from the sky proclaimed, "He or she who is imperfect even to the slightest degree will die on the road. For imperfec-

tion even of the slightest kind can not be allowed in Paradise."

Despite this warning, the five royal princes and the queen led by the dog began their march. After they had passed the forest-clad foothills that gleam like emerald monsters capar-



Still they climbed

isoned in scarlet at sunrise, the King's youngest brother suddenly fell ill, and ere they could give him any medicine, he had died. His soul rose above his body saying, "I am not perfect enough to enter Heaven with my vesture of flesh. I am leaving it behind."

Because they had seen his immortal soul speed on upward to Heaven no one grieved his death.

Dharma said, "Let us cremate this worn-out garment called our brother's body. His soul has cast off this obstacle and flown to the Presence of God."

After the funeral was over, the five human beings led by the dog moved forward. Soon they reached the snow line. It grew very cold and unbearable. Still they climbed. Day after day they marched, goaded by the Heavenward hunger of their souls.

Alas, on the top of Kanchan peak one evening when the stars had just issued from the lilac caverns of the east, the queen's soul left her body. It too spoke the same words spoken by the brother who had just died. "My vesture of flesh I am leaving behind," the soul repeated.

Since without wood it was impossible to cremate their dead, the four royal princes buried the dead queen in the snow. This time Dharma told his three remaining brothers, "Since the soul is never born, it never dies. It is the body that takes birth, it is the body that dies. For the soul there is no death!"

After the funeral rites were done they journeyed on.

A few more days saw the end of all their food. All the same they journeyed on. In a few weeks' time starvation killed Dharma's three remaining brothers. This happened when they had reached the top of the Gauri Shankar (Mt. Everest).

And ere it had flown Heavenwards each man's soul said: "I have found out that I am not all perfect. I am forced to yield to the earth my body in order to let my soul join 'the choir of the gods.'"

With the help of his faithful animal, Dharma buried the



"Now we cross to the kingdom of Time"

mortal remains of the last of the departed. Now he instructed his dog thus, "He who says 'I can kill a living thing' is mistaken. He who says 'I can be killed' is mistaken too. For never the soul was born, never the soul will die. Birthless, deathless, and changeless is the life that each soul lives."

That day Dharma's companion wanted to learn about the rest of the way to Heaven. He said, "Where does the road

lead from here, wise master? My poor mind seems to have lost its sense of direction."

Dharma answered, "With this peak ends the kingdom of space. Now we cross to the kingdom of Time."

Since animals know nothing of time, Dharma had great difficulty in leading his hound. It was a fearful experience for the latter. For the first half of *Time's* kingdom is called night. Mile after mile, hour after hour, the bleak blackness of it they had to penetrate. It was so dark that no mortal eyes could see anything. Whenever Dharma moved, led by the light of his soul, thither went the faithful little beast. Fortunately for both of them their bodies felt no hunger and no thirst of any kind. This happens to all who live in *Time's* dominion.

After what we mortals call six months the frontier of darkness was reached. The two of them now passed into the realm of light. On paths of radiance they walked side by side. Now the animal asked his friend, "What does the darkness that we left behind mean?"

Dharma answered, "It is called memory by men. All old men and women like to live there."

"If the darkness is memory," asked the beast, "what is this light, O King, in which we are moving?"

Dharma answered again, "This is hope. All young men and women like to live here. Whatever you see here is young. But, lo, this too is finished. How swiftly we have gone out of the realm of hope. Where are we now?"

No sooner had he asked the question than before their eyes the diamond gates of Heaven opened, revealing the souls of the King's wife and four brothers who rejoiced to see him arrive.

They said to him, "You are at the gates of Heaven, O righteous one. We are here to receive you. Come join us."

Just then his dog asked, "What is written on that sign? Do you not see a sign to our right?"

"Yes, I see," answered Dharma.

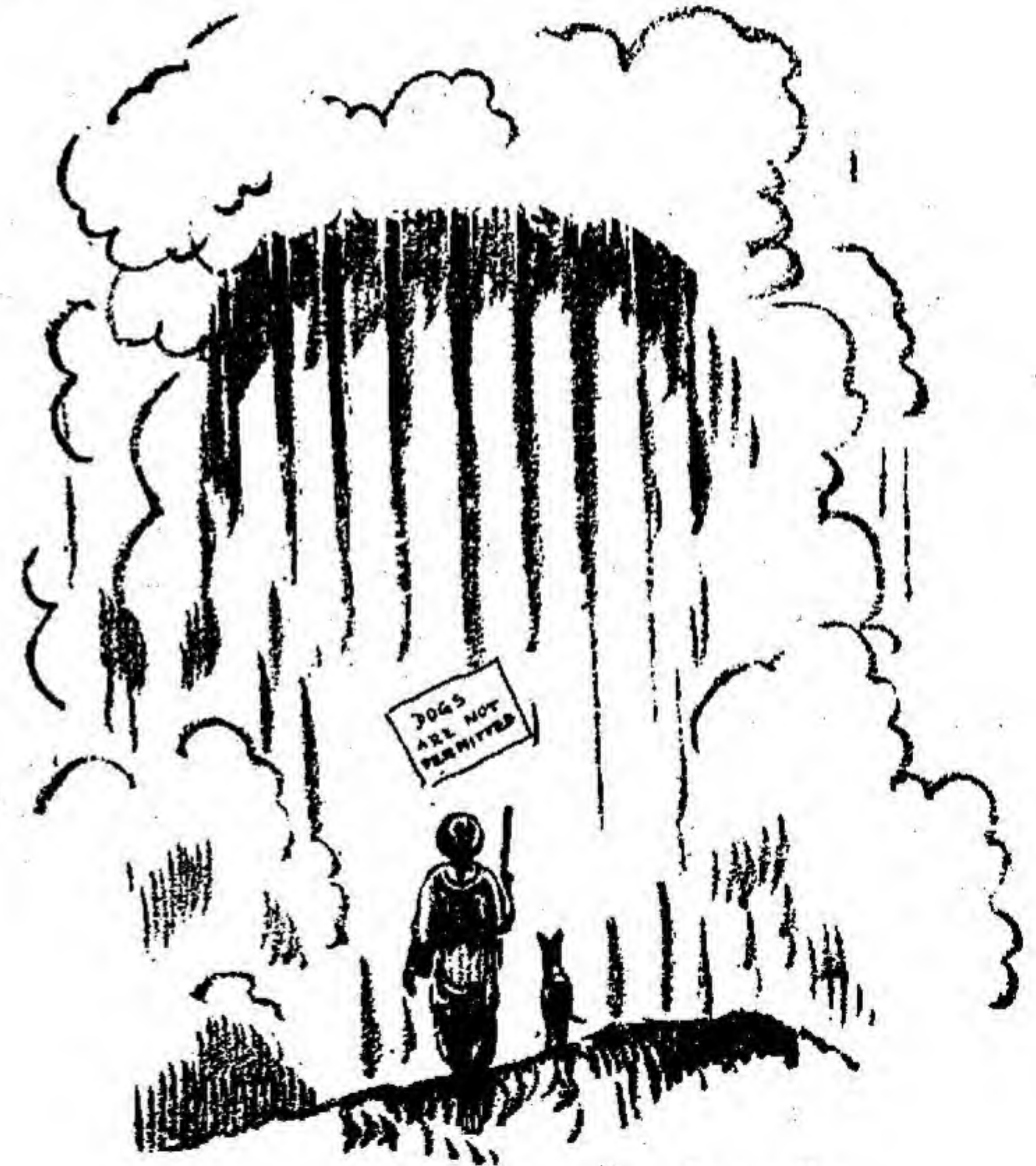
Then he began to read it. After reading it many times the King said, "It says, 'Dogs are not permitted.' O, how unfortunate."

His friend answered, "That settles it. You go in. I will stay right here and look at you through the crystal bars of the gate. Come here occasionally, so that I can see you. Go in now, my master. Your queen is eagerly awaiting you within."

Dharma felt heartsick at the hound's words. What was he to do? Must he give up the joy of entering the Presence of God for the sake of an animal? Besides, the latter was not at all unhappy.

The dog said further: "It is like what it used to be on earth. After you and I had hunted together, we always separated at the door of my kennel. You had to go into the palace to sit on your throne, and I had to go into my box. Now that our present hunt is over, I will live here, and you there, near God."

Within him the King's heart sank. Now that he had to choose between the Presence of God and the companionship of his faithful dog, he felt torn in two. "I do not see," said he, "why your body which is as perfect as mine is not permitted



"My name is Dharmaraja . . ."

here. My name is Dharmaraja, King of Righteousness; now I must judge rightly between you, a dog, and my wish to enter Heaven. Our recent journey has proved that your body is as deathless as mine. How can Heaven do without you? You are sacred. I must decide whether one as holy as you should be left behind."

The hound said, "Let me decide it, O my noble Lord, at least for myself."

That instant Dharma said, "I have decided! I have done it. I will not go in without you. Besides, you will be lonely here; it is right that I should keep you company. We shall make our home on the edge of Heaven, we two." Without another word he sat down beside his dog.

Just then the Voice of God was heard, saying, "Enter, Dharma, with your hound. Your loyalty to it has earned it the right to come to Me. You have passed the supreme test: you have been loyal to an old friend to the utmost."

As if by some magic in an instant, without knowing how, Dharma and his dog found themselves before the throne of God the All-Compassionate. Overwhelmed by what they beheld, they fell on their faces and saluted Him!



IV

A MONKEY TOO WELL TRAINED

HUNDREDS of years ago an idiot was made King of Kashmir. His subjects called him foolish as a monkey, Vanara Murkha, for the reason that he loved to be with monkeys.

Soon after his coronation Murkha bought all kinds of trained monkeys in order to amuse himself with them. He had them dressed as human beings in scarlet, violet, emerald, and gold jackets. Whenever the court assembled the monkeys sat with the nobles of the Kingdom on a footing of equality. Since they were adepts in the art of imitation the animals bowed and scraped before Murkha's throne in the exact man-

ner of the human courtiers. This amused the King very much. It was the nobles who had to make the best of it.

Among these monkeys there was a very clever baboon who grew to be the royal favourite. No matter where his Majesty led, this monkey would follow him. He proved to be the most loyal. In order to show his love for the brute the King



Brushed his clothes

named him Manas, Mind. And mind the baboon had to an amazing degree.

Within a short time after his adoption he grew so skilful that he took the place of the King's valet. He massaged the royal body of his Lord, brushed his clothes, and fanned him with a peacock-fan when Murkha took his afternoon nap. And at night instead of going to bed alone, the King insisted

on having the monkey stay at the foot of his bed like a pet cat.

Now that he had grown to be the King's favourite the animal began to act harshly toward other people. One time he pulled the chief minister's ear. Another time he ran away with a general's sword, brandishing it in the air. To crown all, he began to scream and attack the Queen whenever she happened to draw near her husband.



... and attack the Queen

His Majesty had grown so fond of him that he enjoyed the monkey's every behaviour as a good joke. Every time he ran away with any old duke's wig, laughter of approval greeted him. No doubt, this encouraged the baboon to grow worse and worse.

As if he had become human enough, he was now taught to fence with a sharp sword. He became skilful beyond expectation. For instance one day seeing a fly on the wall of the palace he brought down his sword and deftly cut off its head. This was such skilful sword-play that all the courtiers, the

King, and even the Queen applauded, and gave him bananas, apples and almonds for his supper.

So much praise went to the monkey's head. Every day he took delight in frightening the King's servants by brandishing his sword. People used to flee his presence like rabbits from a fox. Not that he did anything harmful, but the King's



People used to flee his presence

subjects feared that a beast armed like a man is most dangerous. However, as time passed, the King and his courtiers became used to the sword-carrying monkey, so much so that his Majesty slept in his animal's presence without disarming it.

Of course during the warm weather the monkey used to fan his master with a fan. One hot June afternoon during the King's siesta, a swarm of flies invaded the royal presence. With his fan the monkey waved them away. No matter how

many flies there were, he tried to drive them away with his fan. For a while he succeeded, but even an animal gets tired.



He took his sword and sought to slaughter them

This particular afternoon the flies came in swarms. In order to keep them away the baboon had to wave his fan constantly. At last he grew frantic. Lo, the instant he would stop his fanning, a fly would alight on his Majesty's beard, tickling the

royal sleeper almost to waking. The weary baboon had to wave the fan very fast, close to the face of his master in order to get rid of the pest.

After the fly had gone off, he put the fan down for a little rest. Alas, not for long. A dozen flies, new ones, came past him and alighted on the King's throat. Utterly exasperated, he took his sword and sought to slaughter them.

Suddenly he brought his sword down on them. Before he could realise what he had done, his master lay cut in two before him. King Murkha had been beheaded by his pet beast!

Thus died the foolish King who made too much of a monkey. But it is said that the monkey was so grief-stricken at what he had done that he did not offer any resistance when he had to meet death at the hands of two of the late King's guardsmen.

The moral of this story is that no matter how we train an animal it can do no miracles. You may give a monkey a sword but you cannot make a man out of him.



V

HOW CAT AND RAT BECAME FRIENDS

ONE night Jyn the wild cat, in spite of his very good eyes, failed to see the trap that Kisan the farmer had laid for him. And ere the poor animal knew how, he had been trapped securely. Though he struggled hard to get free, he could not break through. In fact, each move on his part entangled him all the more. So, at last, tired of body and sick at heart, he resigned himself to his fate. "In the morning Kisan will club me to death," he said to himself. "Till then I shall sleep."

But sleep he could not. Like a fly in a spider web, his mind became very restless. As the hours passed they deepened his unrest. Though he was very hungry and a morsel of meat lay under his nose, Jyn had not the slightest desire to eat. . . .

About an hour before daybreak he was startled by a soft

noise. Suddenly he noticed Musika the rat. In order to warn him from the fate that had overtaken himself, Jyn shouted, "Beware of the trap, brother. Who are you?"

The rat laughed, "It is a great honour to be called brother by a cat. I am Musika, the rat whom you tried to kill only yesternight."

Jyn said: "All living creatures are brothers in the presence



The rat laughed

of death. I am going to be killed in less than an hour by the farmer who laid this trap. Why must you too walk into it? Take my warning: keep away hence. Do not come too near the net."

Musika said, "I am thankful to you for your warning. But I too am doomed to death, for do you not hear the wing-beat of Pechaka, the big owl, overhead? He wants to make his breakfast out of my corpse. And yonder, behind you, is Choongi the Mongoose bent upon the same errand. I have no

hope of escaping two such foes. Besides I am out of breath from running away from both of them. As long as I keep near your trap, the fear of being caught in it will keep them both at least a few feet away from me. That is why I have ventured to come here, O mighty cat, who are the greatest enemy of our race. Can you save me from the owl and the mongoose?"



Pechaka, the owl, having seen the rat lie next to the cat . . .

"I who am about to die offer my sincerest friendship to you. Come nearer, take shelter by going to sleep lying next to me. Your enemies will not venture near this terrible trap. Come nearer still."

Musika said to him, "I shall with pleasure."

The cat explained anew, "I am about to die. Permit me to acquire virtue by helping you to live."

Pechaka, the owl, having seen the rat lie next to the cat,

gave up the chase, and flew in quest of another rat for his breakfast. Soon the mongoose followed his example, saying, "Hungry though I be I dare not go near the trap where my prey is."

"Behold," said the cat, "your enemies have fled. Now that the day is breaking you had better flee this spot. Soon Kisan will come with his club to take my life. If he sees you, he may kill you, too."

"I am in no hurry," answered Musika. "My hole is a dozen yards from here. I shall easily run thither when I see him coming. He is a biped. He cannot run fast. I fear him not, but tell me, O great Jyn, what wilt thou do?"

Jyn shrugged his shoulders and remarked, "The sun is rising. I must commend my soul to the gods of the cat race ere I die. I shall say my prayers now."

To the amazement of the rat, Jyn began to pray. Having never seen nor heard cats pray, Musika was puzzled and pleased at the same time. It raised the murderous cat's fame in his estimation. His heart grew soft. "If cats practice religion then they can not be all bad," he said to himself.

Suddenly he decided to do the poor trapped fellow a service. With his sharp teeth he began to snap the strings that had trapped Jyn.

"Snap, snap, snap," heard the praying rat-eater. "Snap, snap, snap, snap, snap," he heard again. "Snap, snap, and snap!"

Unable to shut his ears to the noise, he opened his eyes to

see. . . . Lo, the rat was feverishly at work to save his life. He could not believe his own eyes, so he blinked several times and looked again.

"Yes, no mistake," he said aloud, "you are trying to save me from death, brother."

"I am," the rat said briefly. Then he went on working.



"Snap, snap, snap," heard the praying rat-eater

Alas, it was too late. Kisan the farmer was approaching with club in hand. He was shouting, "Ha, O thou killer of my chickens, now thou shalt taste death from my club. At last, thou art securely caught. I am in a great hurry to kill thee."

Jyn said to the rat, "Hurry, brother, hurry, he is hardly fifty yards away."

The rat said, "There is only one string that holds you here. It will be easy to cut with one strong bite of my teeth."

"Why do you not bite it?" begged Jyn.

Musika answered, "If I free you now, you will have time enough to kill me as well as making good your escape from Kisan. But if I free you later, you will be so eager to run away from the oncoming farmer's bludgeon that you won't think of killing me for your breakfast."

Jyn said with terror in his voice, "Do as you wish. I cannot quarrel, for I know the cat race has done so much harm to the rats in the past. You who are generous enough to have bitten off so many of my bonds, surely will bite the last string in the nick of time."

Now having noticed that the rat had been biting his net and freeing the cat the farmer ran towards them, brandishing his bludgeon.

This struck terror into the cat's heart. He prayed: "Hurry, brother rat, hurry. I beg you to save me. Bite off the last string."

But there was no answer. Instead he heard the patter of the rat's scurrying feet, followed by this remark, "I have snapped the last one. Run for your life. You are free."

No sooner heard than done. The cat leaped into the air. Lo, his feet had cleared the broken trap. What a miracle! Kisan's club came flying at him. This he dodged successfully. Now he ran faster than he had ever done in his whole life, and vanished in the jungle.

The rat who had gained his hole already, sat at its mouth

and watched the cat running and the man throwing stones after him. This amused him exceedingly.

The next evening Jyn sought out the hole of Musika and spoke to his friend these words: "Friend, I came to thank you



No sooner heard than done

for saving my life. Do not come out of your hiding, if you suspect me to be bad. But I swear to you by the gods of the cat race that I will be your friend and servant as long as I live. My gratitude is sincere."

Musika answered: "I will come out just to test your sincerity. I am not afraid to die."

Slowly he came. Each footstep weighed heavier than the one before. Though his mind was full of gloomy ideas his heart was free of fear. At last, after what seemed like an endless walk Musika stepped out of his hole and faced the cat. It seemed for a moment that the cat was going to pounce on him. So he shut his eyes, and waited for death. . . . But since nothing of the sort happened he opened them and looked at the cat.

The latter said quietly: "Now that you know for certain that I am your friend let us go hunting together. I will see to it that you know for certain that I am your friend. Let us hunt together. No owl nor mongoose shall attack you."

Thus came about the great friendship between Jyn and Musika. This happened a long time ago when cats and rats understood one another's language.



VI

A HOLY MAN AND A FRIGHTENED BUNNY

ST. MIRACLE lived in a cave at the foothills of the Himalayas. Because he could do miracles, he never lacked food though he lived far away from any village or town.

Since whatever he spoke aloud came true, every time he felt hungry St. Miracle would pluck a few leaves from a tree and turn them into bread and fruits by saying: "Now become my food."

No sooner said than done: instantly obeying his words the leaves became bread and fruits.

It was because he had that power that the saint never

spoke too often, for he did not wish to abuse the gift that God had given him. In order to avoid talking aloud too often, he lived where no human being could make him say a word.

One morning just after the sun had risen, the holy man was startled when a rabbit had jumped into his lap.

"Out of a clear sky you have leaped on my lap. Who are you? Why are you shaking so?"

The bunny who had been frightened beyond speech could say nothing for a while. Lifting his eyes from the creature on his lap, the saint looked at the mouth of his cave. There stood a big fox glaring at the bunny.

"So you have been chasing this poor rabbit. You have chased him here. What do you want with him?"

The fox answered: "He is my dinner. I am famished; I have had nothing to eat for four days. Please hand over to me my God-given victim. If God made him for me to eat, why should you interfere?"

The saint explained: "It is true God has made bunnies and foxes. If I am to save this animal on my lap, I must offer another in his place to you, the hungry one. You are both guests at my door. It is sinful to send away one's guests without giving them what they need. What am I to do?"

Now the bunny who had recovered from his fear suggested: "Why don't you do a miracle, O holy one?"

"Yes, that I can do," answered the saint.

He took a stone that lay near him and turned it into meat, then threw it at the fox who departed feeling content.

It was easy to get rid of the fox. But not so easy to send away the rabbit into the jungle where wolves, leopards, and tigers hunt day and night. As if he was at his wits' end, St. Miracle asked his guest: "What can I do to make you content? I will do whatever you ask of me."

The bunny who was quick of mind humbly asked this



boon: "Turn me into a fox, O holy one. Then I will be safe from all foxes."

"So be it," murmured Miracle.

That instant the bunny turned into a fox and ran into the jungle rejoicing. But his joy was brief. The very next day while hunting for food, he got in the way of a leopard. The latter chased him with the desire to kill. Since he dared not fight, he ran faster and faster. But the leopard could run faster than he. In a short time, it became clear to him that death was

at hand. Just then, he looked to his right. Lo, it was the mouth of St. Miracle's cave. With a great shout of joy, he ran in and begged for protection from the holy man. The latter now had to face a hungry leopard who growled in an ugly manner and demanded: "What do you mean by protecting that fox? He made me lose a rabbit that I was hunting. Either hand him over to me, or I will kill you both."

This infuriated the saint. He said: "Killing is sin; you know that, friend leopard."

But the leopard growled more menacingly: "I shall leap at you if you do not hand him over to me."

The saint in order to protect the fox as well as himself began to think hard. Just then that little animal said: "If you make me a tiger I will drive him from here. For tigers are stronger than leopards."

"So be it," murmured Miracle.

Now it was the leopard's turn to run, for according to the holy man's words, the fox had suddenly turned into a tiger and was leaping forward to kill. Fortunately for the spotted fellow, he had already run to the woods, and climbed a tree out of the tiger's reach. Now the latter moved about as if he owned the world. Save one animal a tiger has nothing to fear.

The very next morning while the holy man was getting ready to say his prayers, into his cave came a fear-stricken tiger begging for protection. He demanded: "Who are you? What do you want here? Why must you disturb my prayers?"

"I am the bunny whom you saved by doing two miracles. O holy one, now I am chased by an elephant fifteen feet high. Save me, O save me."

"Be calm, my son. No elephant fifteen feet high can enter a cave only six feet high at its mouth."

"True," a big tusker trumpeted from the outside. "I cannot enter your holy presence, O saint, nor do I wish to come be-



tween you and your prayers. This is the hour when you speak to God. I crave your pardon for having disturbed you at all. Farewell."

After humbly saluting the man of God from a distance, the elephant vanished into the woods. Miracle now faced the striped cat in his presence: "What do you wish now?"

The tiger begged: "Make me an elephant, O holy one."

But the saint was of another mind. He said, "I will not do that. As a bunny you were afraid. So I made you a fox. As

a fox, you were afraid. Now as a tiger you are afraid. I see now what is wrong with you."

"Please make me an elephant. Please, I beg of you," pleaded the tiger.

"No," was the final reply of Miracle. The saint spoke further: "Do you know what you ought to become?"

"What, my Lord?" the tiger wished to know.

That instant Miracle said: "You should become a rabbit again."

No sooner said than done. The tiger now became the bunny that God had made him. But instead of taking the change handsomely, he began to whimper and complain: "My Lord, you have done me a mean turn."

Miracle now spoke words of wisdom to him. "You are so fear-stricken that no matter what form you take—fox or tiger—you carry fear into it. What must be done by you is the overcoming of fear. Do you know how to get rid of the fear that is in your heart? What you have to change is not your appearance but your heart."

"How can it be done, my Lord?" meekly answered the rabbit.

"I will teach you." After saying these words, St. Miracle gave the bunny his first lesson: "Sit there, my son. Now keep saying to yourself, 'I am infinite courage. I give out infinite courage.' Go on repeating those words."

"How many times shall I say these words?" the bunny asked.

"Repeat them all the time. That is: repeat them till your heart, mind, and body feel brave through and through."



The rabbit did as he was told, not only that day, but three



hundred more days. Suddenly one morning after the sun had



turned the jungle into a sea of green and purple light, the bunny felt courage rise like a fountain from his heart. It ran

through, and possessed every inch of his body. Now he wanted to go away into the woods. But the holy man urged him to stay a little longer.

"You feel and act courage, my son. Your heart and body are free of fear. Now work a little time with your imagination. Can you think courage? Think that all animals are friendly toward you."



The bunny obeyed. One day when he became completely brave not only in body, but in thought too, St. Miracle offered to turn him into the biggest elephant in the world, saying: "Do you want to be the bravest monster?"

The rabbit said, "What good would that do? Don't elephants die?"

The holy man said, "Yes, elephants too die in time."

The rabbit said, "Why then become an elephant? O holy one, permit me to live and die a rabbit, only with this dif-

ference: I was born with fear in me; from now on I shall live without it. This change I owe to you. Now I shall go wherever I please. I shall have no holes to hide in, and no enemy to run from. I will face the animal who attacks me. Even if he kills me, it will make no difference, for he will kill my body. My fearless soul then will go up to join 'the choir of the gods.'"

After saying farewell to the saint our bunny went out into the woods. Of course, it did not take him long to come face-to-face with a fox. But instead of running away he stood his ground. This amazed the fox who said, "Are you not afraid?"

Asked bunny, "Why should I be?"

The fox then advanced nearer. The rabbit advanced too. This frightened the former. In order to hide his feelings he spoke thus: "You are the rabbit come down from Heaven. You do not run away as the bunnies of the earth do. O divine one, forgive me for having come near you. Permit me, please, to go home." Now with one long leap he vanished out of sight.

Seeing that he had overcome his fear of the fox the rabbit now went in quest of a leopard. And when he found one, instead of running away he walked towards it. This frightened the spotted fellow.

He said, "You must be 'the bunny in the moon' come down to earth.¹ You are not afraid of me as all earthly rabbits

¹ How the Bunny in the Moon originated the reader will find in my "Hindu Fables."

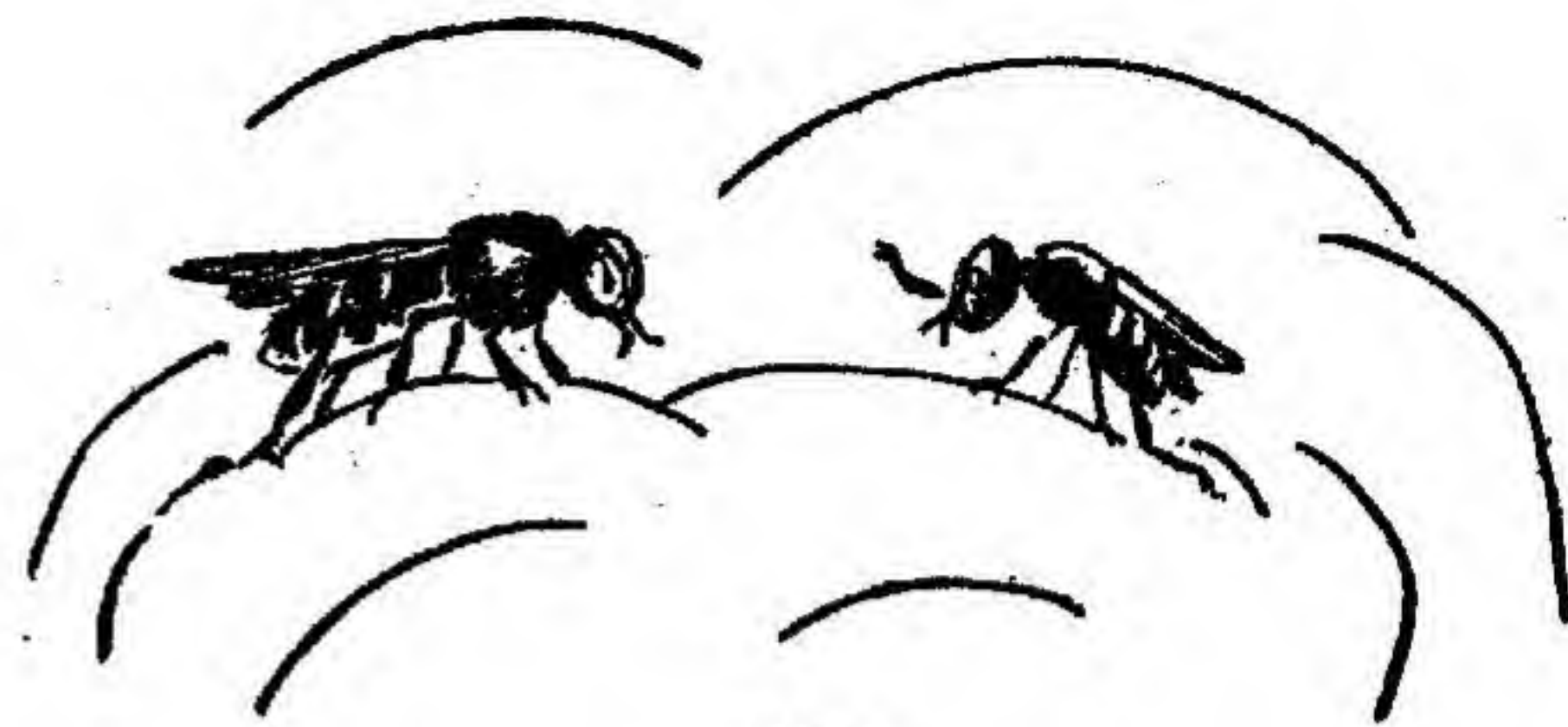
are. O divine one, permit me to withdraw from your presence." With those words he leaped and vanished out of the bunny's sight.

The same thing happened when that day the rabbit met a big tiger. He too trembled in terror as he saw the bunny come forward unafraid. The tiger ran away.

Soon after the striped cat had run away the rabbit came across Sirdar, the chief of the biggest elephants of the forest. As the rabbit drew nearer and nearer Sirdar said, "My trunk gets no odour of fear which I usually get from rabbits. Are you real or are you a magic rabbit?"

Then our bunny told him the whole story of his life. At the end of which the elephant requested: "If you don't mind, may I become a friend of yours?"

"Since I am without fear, I have no enemies, only friends," answered the bunny most humbly.



VII

A CONCEITED FLY

A FLY named Makhika saw the bee Bhramara hovering about a blue lotus.

"Why," he asked, "do you waste your time on flowers?"

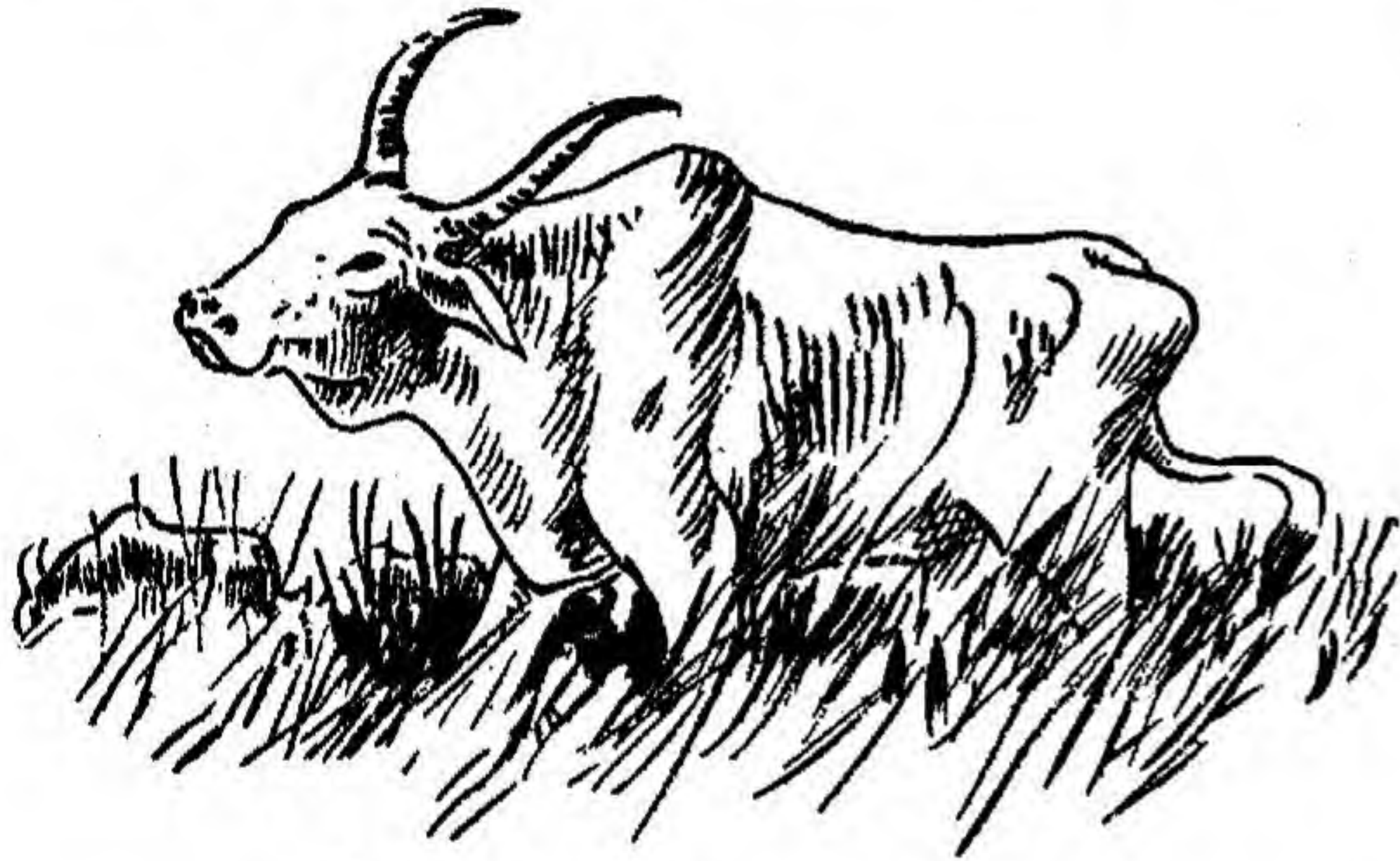
Bhramara answered, "I am too busy to talk. Flowers are just heavy enough to support my weight and have honey enough to nourish me."

Makhika explained to him further. "I think you are a lightweight. Look at me. I am very heavy. Besides I need so much food that flowers cannot supply my needs. I sit on the backs of tigers. Do you know I am the weightiest animal living?"

Bhramara, in order to be rid of him, answered briefly, "Excuse me, I am very busy." He flew away, afar, and set to rifling the heart of a lotus.

Makhika now flew in the direction of the pasture where

cows were grazing. He alighted on the neck of Bhrisa, the bull. In a few seconds, bitten by the fly, Bhrisa shook his head violently. Makhika flew up in the air saying, "I am afraid you find me too heavy. I shan't trouble you any further with my weight. It is kinder to leave you. You must have found me too heavy for your neck."



Bhrisa shook his head violently

From there he flew to the royal stable where the King kept his horses. After choosing the largest stallion he alighted on its neck. In a few minutes, unable to bear the fly's bite he shook his head violently. Makhika flew up in the air, saying, "You too cannot bear my weight. So sorry."

Before the horse could answer, the fly had buzzed out of

earshot. In the course of that day he flew from place to place and repeated the same vain words to almost all the beasts that had to carry him on their backs. Since he never paused



This one too shook his head violently

to hear what they had to say, he became quite convinced that he was the heaviest person in the world.

The next day Makhika spent among some dead horses. Since these did not speak, nor shake their heads at him, he

did not know what to make of it. At nightfall when he went home, he said to himself, "The animals today bore my weight in silence. Maybe my weight killed them the moment I landed on each one of them. Too bad. Tomorrow I shall be careful not to sit on horses. Why kill the poor beasts?"

On the morrow he came upon a caravan of a thousand camels. The first of these shook his head violently as the fly bit into his neck. Makhika left him saying, "You find me too heavy? I shan't trouble you again. So sorry."

Before the camel could make any reply the fly had flown on to the neck of the third beast in line who looked much bigger. This one too shook his head violently when bitten by Makhika. On the fly's saying that he was sorry for the poor beast the camel answered: "If you feel that way about it, why don't you sit on the neck of an elephant? He will support you."

Makhika asked, "What is an elephant? What does he look like?"

The camel answered, "A large animal who carries himself on four legs, like thick pillars. Besides he wears two tails."

"An animal with two tails? Where can I find him?" the fly wanted to know.

The camel said, "On this road. Right behind us is coming a whole caravan of them. I can hear the elephant bells."

True to his words the road was filled with a peal of elephant bells. Soon they strode forward. Each one of them was

caparisoned in thick blue and red rugs tasselled with silver bells.

After selecting the biggest elephant Makhika alighted on his neck. He sat there a long time, yet the big brute went on as if there were no fly about. Now the latter bit him. But lo, the pachyderm did not shake his head in pain.

"This fellow does not find me heavy!" the fly spoke to himself. He bit again, harder than before. This time too his mount made no movement of his head. Makhika was puzzled by this.

"What does this mean? Have I at last found an animal who can bear my weight? Praise be to the gods! My search for a strong mount is over. I shall live with him, fit for one like myself." Just then by chance the elephant shook his ears.

With great pity the fly said, "Do you at last find me heavy? You poor beast!"

The Hati¹ demanded, "Who are you?"

Makhika was most surprised. He buzzed fiercely, then said: "I am Makhika, the fly, the heaviest burden that you have ever carried."

Hati said, "I have never heard of you. Where do you come from? Where have you been?"

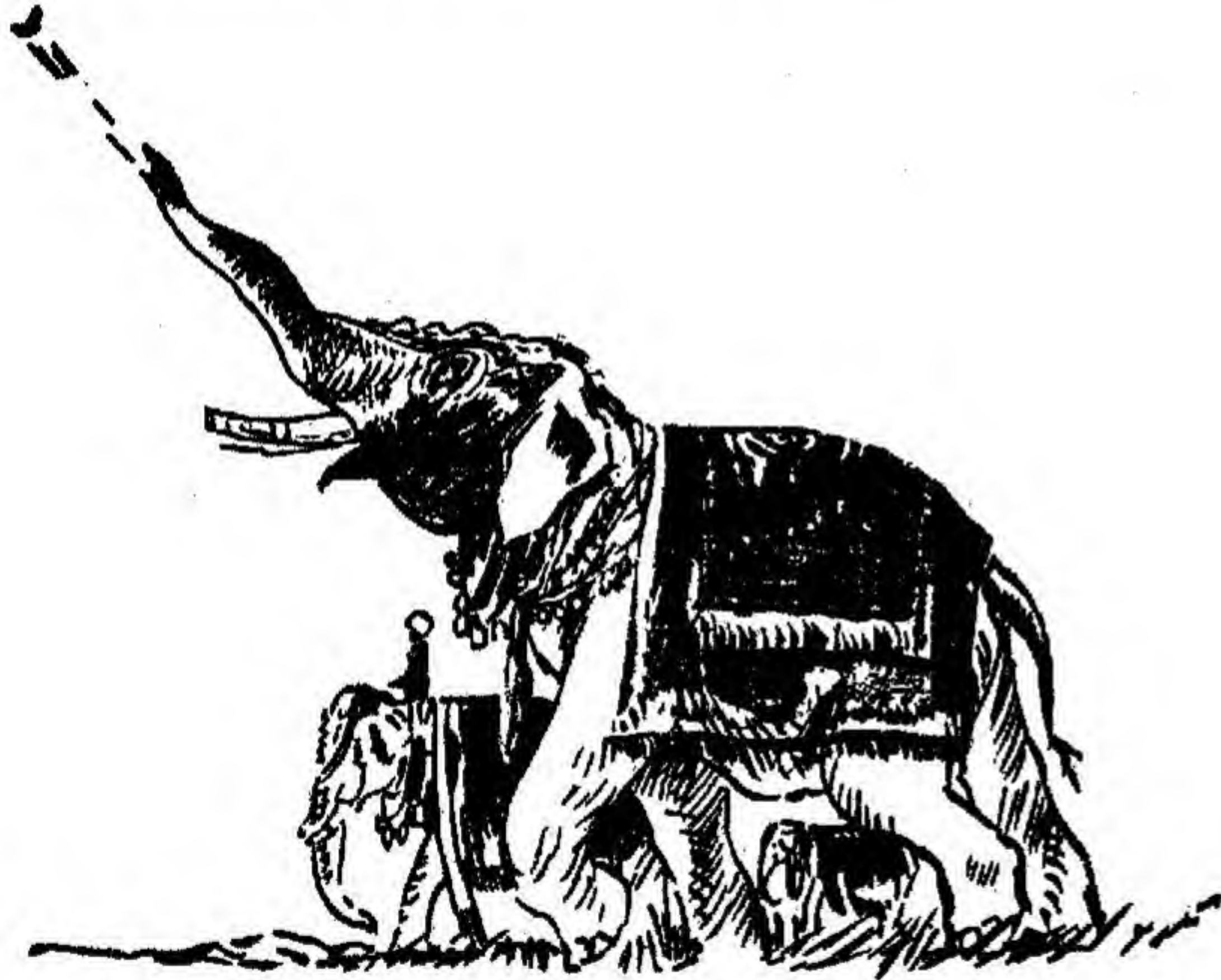
The fly answered patiently, "I have been sitting on your neck for hours. Don't you know?"

"No," grunted the elephant. "You cannot be much in

¹ Hati is the Hindu word for elephant.

weight, for I have never felt you a second the whole afternoon. You must be very light—lighter than a dried leaf.”

“No, I am not,” Makhika retorted hotly.



“There—snoossh!”

The elephant now decided to amuse himself at the expense of the fly. “Look here,” he said, “here is a dried leaf which I have just now picked up from the road on my trunk. I shall blow on it. There—snoossh!”

That instant the leaf flew up and up, past the branches of a tall tree. It flew still higher; and was lost to sight.

The fly asked scornfully, “What does that prove?”

The elephant said, “Now if you sit on my forehead and if I blow on you, I shall send you flying to the half-moon that is in the sky.”



Then blew. . . .

“You are a braggart,” Makhika replied.

“We will know in a few moments who is the real braggart, if you will just sit on my forehead.”

“This is silly,” went on the vain fly. “But since you insist, I shall oblige you. I am so heavy that by sitting on your forehead, I shall probably break your neck.”

“I shall take the risk,” rejoined the Hati.

After buzzing most noisily, the fly alighted on the forehead of the elephant. In the meantime, Hati who had drawn a mighty breath raised his trunk very close, then blew. . . .

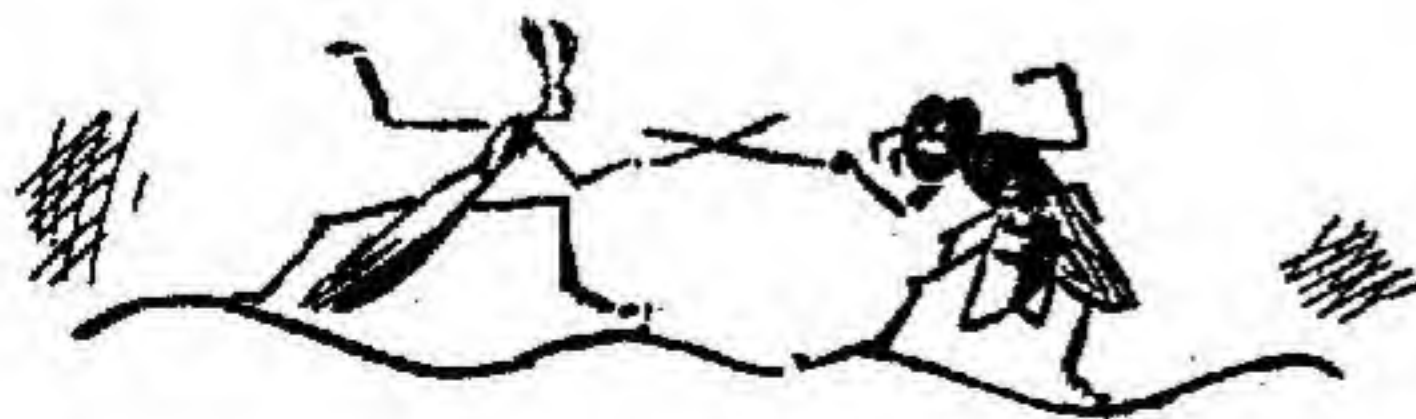
Like a bit of tissue paper in a whirlwind, the fly was carried up and up, above the tall tree, past the many small birds, beyond the high flying kites, towards the dizzy silence of the clouds. He went on and on, rolling and tumbling. At last he felt as if he were seeing the stars. . . . He had swooned away. In time he came back to the earth. When he had come to his senses he found himself lying in the heart of a lily. As he looked around, not far off he beheld his old friend, Bhramara the bee.

"Hello, Makhika. What knocked you silly like this?"

In order to save his own face our hero said, "You see, I had a fight with an elephant. He knocked me out."

"Too bad," exclaimed the bee. "Next time choose to fight with what you can tackle, gnats, for example."

Since the busy bee had already flown out of earshot, Makhika could not say anything more to him. But in his own heart he had to admit that Bhramara had spoken the truth. No fly was a match for anything bigger than a gnat.



VIII

CAT WHO BECAME KING OF A JUNGLE

MARJARA, the cat, played the part of a clown in a circus in the holy city of Benares. He wore red trousers and coat. His tail was sheathed in gold. Alas, we cannot speak of his clowning at length since our story has nothing to do with his part in the circus. It is the part that he played afterward that matters.

How he became the King of tigers and elephants in a jungle happened in a strange manner.

One day when the circus was travelling from Benares to

Moombaie it had to take the road through a dangerous forest. There it was attacked by a band of robbers.

As is the custom of robbers in every land they robbed the circus manager of all his wealth and horses; then vanished into the forest.

Since night was coming on apace in order to seek a place of safety the circus owner and his human companions decided to walk towards their starting point—Benares.

"But what shall we do with the monkeys, the dogs, and the cat, our performing animals?" they asked one another.

"We must leave them behind," said the manager. "We have no horses, nor oxen to draw their cages back to the holy city. Let us set them free before we go."

Having unlocked all the cages the human beings set out for their homes in Benares. Now what were the animals to do? "What are we to do?" asked the cat of the monkeys.

The monkeys did not mind being left behind. But the dogs did mind it. They said, "We are friends of man. We serve him. We must lead those human beings back to civilisation. Now that they are without guides, we the dogs must help the men out of this jungle. They can not have gone very far. Let us run and catch up with them."

Without wasting any more words, the dogs said a brief good-bye to Marjara and the monkeys. Then they ran in the direction taken by the human beings.

Now the cat climbed up the tree where the monkeys had

taken shelter and spent the night studying his surroundings. On the morrow at the first flush of dawn the restless monkeys left him, and went in search of fruit trees in different directions.

Alone in the thick and terrible forest, poor Marjara felt



His muscles grew tense with terror

sad. All the same the air was so pleasant and the sense of liberty so great that he soon got over his lonesome feeling. Being free to do what he pleased and because he felt very hungry, the cat decided to come down to the floor of the jungle in order to hunt for mice.

Hardly had the red sun leaped over the horizon, when the crimson-clad Marjara descended from the tree.

His muscles grew tense with terror. His whiskers sensed

danger in every blade of grass that they touched. His heart beat very fast at the slightest sound. He was quivering with fear.

Now to crown all he beheld a tiger coming towards him. Marjara felt small as a mouse before this royal monster. He was so frightened that he could not move even an inch out of the big cat's path. Had he only known the tiger's feeling at seeing him he would have been surprised, for though big and brave by nature, the bigger animal was terrified. The red on Marjara had frightened "the striped one." As he scrutinised the little animal's dress, he said to himself, "Here is an animal clad in red flames. He cannot be an animal—he must be a god. Only the gods are vested in fire."

So instead of killing the cat he fell on his face and prayed to it: "O fire-born one, O sun come down from Heaven, have mercy upon me. I beseech you not to destroy me by setting fire to me. I will do anything you command me to do short of dying. If you wish, I will give up eating meat."

This speech made the cat laugh. That frightened the tiger all the more. He grovelled on the ground and prayed anew: "Your Majesty is pleased to laugh. Now I beg you to spare my life. Make me your servant. I know who you are. You are the divine ruler of the jungle whose coming has been prophesied. I bend my neck under the feet of your Majesty. Command me. I am your slave. O divine one, permit me to carry you on my back."

Now smiling at the turn that events had taken, Marjara decided to play the rôle of a god-king. He jumped on the back of the tiger and ordered him: "Take me to my court in



"Stop roaring, fool"

order to place me on my throne. There you shall proclaim to the world that I am the Heaven-sent new Lord of this forest. I am the one whose coming has been prophesied."

Obedying meekly, the tiger trotted in the direction of the royal palace. He roared every few paces that he took. This

made the cat nervous. He scolded his mount: "Stop roaring, fool."

"But, your Majesty, I am proclaiming to the jungle folk to come to greet their Lord descended from the sky."

The cat said, "In that case roar mightily, for my Majesty can not be made known too loudly."

On reaching the beautiful royal palace of emerald bamboo, before innumerable wolves, leopards, tigers, and other beasts of prey, the cat was crowned King Marjara I. He was treated like a King too. Ten tigers pulled his chariots. Two hundred panthers, serving as his servants, waited on him day and night. They hunted far and wide for his dinner since he loved to eat delicate meat and toothsome fowl. His very slightest wishes were carried out as if they were the heaviest orders. Thus ruled Marjara I in his forest kingdom.

Of course, he became very lazy and fat in a short time. Eating too much and exercising very little made him grow so stout that one day he burst out of his red trousers and coat. Imagine to yourself a fat common cat with nothing on but his fur! Fortunately this happened in the day-time when all his subjects, the tigers, the leopards, and the wolves were sleeping. Not a soul was there to witness the appearance of nothing but a cat from inside those red garments. Had any one of the tigers seen him now he would have killed the King in a trice.

Being cunning beyond compare Marjara planned to run away from the jungle before it was too late. He knew for certain that his life would be in danger if his subjects woke up and discovered his real self. The fact that they had been ruled by a mere cat would rankle in the most bitter manner in the heart of any tiger. This in turn would make him want to kill Marjara.

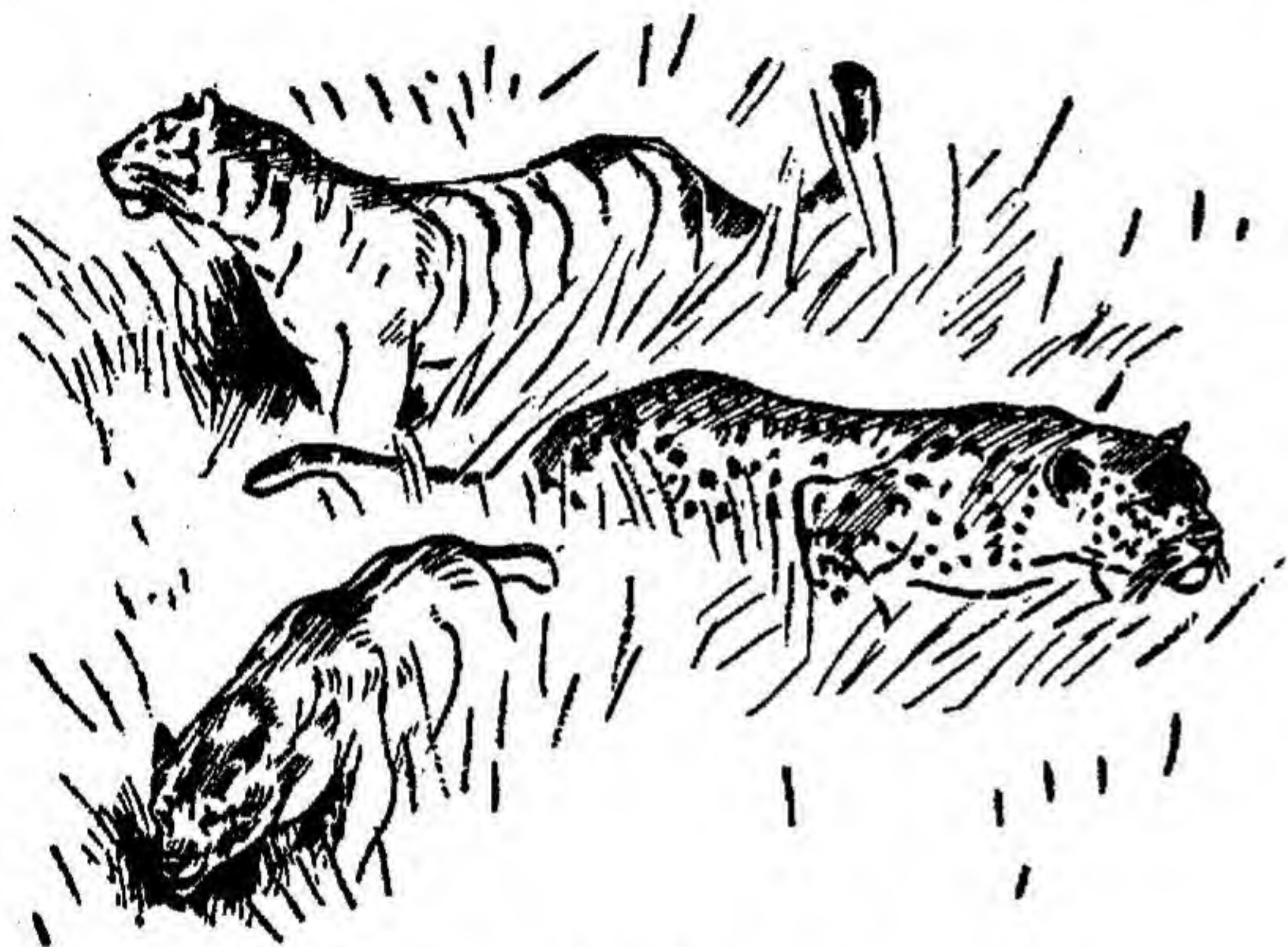
So ere his courtiers had awakened he climbed up the tallest tree of his kingdom and hid on its top. It amused him very much to watch their consternation when they had opened their eyes.

"Where is the King? Where is the King? What happened to him? Look, here are his clothes," shouted tiger after tiger. "Search for him. Find him. Search for him," went out many orders in different directions. "The King, the King," chorused the jungle beasts.

But since nobody thought of searching the trees the cat was left untroubled. He in turn kept watch on their movements.

As soon as all the animals had gone off searching after their King into other parts of the jungle, Marjara started to walk from tree to tree, scanning the sky every few minutes for the slightest sign of a village or a town where Man lived. His safety lay in getting back to civilisation. This he knew most certainly. For only in a big town could he be safe from his erstwhile subjects.

Having grown fat and lazy, he could not go very fast. As soon as night came, he hid himself securely on a tall tree and sought sleep. Alas, sleep was out of the question, for



"Not a footprint do I find on the ground"

every few minutes he heard shouts and screams from below. One time a tiger cried, "I have found him!" The very words made Marjara shake with terror. Another time a panther proclaimed, "If we wait here we shall catch him. Then what a killing it will be." Fortunately each one of these shouts led

to nothing. The cat was hiding too far up the tree. No animal could reach there unless he too was small as a cat.

"But where is he?" asked a wolf. "He is not here. Not a footprint do I find on the ground."

This kind of talk went on all night. The poor cat did not get a wink of sleep.

At last, the day broke. Now all his enemies retired into the depth of the woods. After making sure that they had gone far, far away, Marjara came down from the tree and ran in search of a place of safety. Alas, he was too fat. Naturally, he could not make much headway. When the sun had set again, his ears heard the call of his subjects who had formed search-parties and had been hunting for him. Since another night of sleeplessness and terror had to be passed on a high tree, he slowly climbed to the top of one and hid under its foliage.

When the third day dawned and ere the searchers had gone to sleep, Marjara made a desperate rush to reach the river which was the frontier of his kingdom.

He was almost there when the sun went down smiting the river into ripples of rainbow. The sight of the water made him feel so thirsty that he decided to take a drink. He wasted a lot of time choosing a very comfortable spot to drink from. The comfort-loving fellow wandered up and down the river bank looking for a place. At last he found, projecting halfway across the river, a dried log whose end

almost rested on the surface of the water. Without thinking twice he walked on it till he reached the end of the fallen tree.

After he had drunk his fill, Marjara turned round to walk back to the shore. Now what he beheld made him shriek with terror. A dozen panthers, his own subjects, were standing on the river bank in a row. They were whispering to one another, "We will kill him. What an insult—we have been ruled by a common cat, and did not know it. We must kill him. Wipe him off the face of the earth. The filthy alley cat. Kill him."

This made Marjara angry. But swallowing his pride he said, "What do you want here?"

They shouted in unison, "We want to rip you to pieces." "Oh, no, you won't," he taunted them; "you idiots."

"Come here, you dirty alley cat," they ordered him.

"Alley cats yourselves," he taunted them once more. "You have the brains of a rabbit. You, you, you—" He was so angry and frightened that he could not finish his sentence.

Now being enraged and roused by the cat's insults, the biggest panther walked forward, stepping carefully on the log. Inch by inch, minute by minute, advanced this image of death, while his friends shouted after him, "Kill the alley cat, kill him, kill!"

But Marjara had no ears for them. He was praying to

Heaven under his breath, while his eyes watched the leopard coming down on him with eyes flaming red, his big body



It made the little cat sick with fear

quivering with rage, and his teeth glistening like large knives. It made the little cat sick with fear.

Now he looked at the water below. It hissed like a serpent; no doubt, the river was running very fast. Now Marjara fully realised his plight. Death before him, and death behind him. No way out.

Suddenly he felt the hot breath of the leopard upon his face. Look, there, the monster was opening his mouth hardly one foot away! Now he shut his eyes tight and waited to be bitten to death. The water hissed, and the panther roared! Just then—then a cracking noise, loud as a thunder crash—cold shivers ran through him. . . .

But what was this? He had fallen into the river. The panther too. Apparently the panther's weight had broken the dried log, and flung him as well as Marjara into the stream. Now they were swirled away by the treacherous current.

Fortunately for Marjara, he had grown so fat that he floated down the river easily. Alas, the poor muscular panther who was too heavy for the water sank lower and lower. He being too heavy was drowned very soon.

During the night when he realised that his enemy was dead and he himself might succeed in getting ashore, Marjara tried to swim. Because he could float easily, every stroke of his paws helped to get him nearer the shore. As if by a miracle at last he came to a city where the river was covered with boats. . . . It was one of the boatmen who picked him

up just before dawn and gave him shelter. The rest of his life he spent as the boatman's mascot. Here ends the story of Marjara who though a cat once ruled over tigers and leopards.





IX

THE MAKING OF THE POLE STAR AND THE BIG BEAR

THE Crown Prince Dhruva was seven years old when his father, the King, grew very wicked. Even the wisest subjects of the kingdom could not explain why a good man suddenly became so bad.

He behaved most cruelly toward every person. He went so far as to send out into the jungle his queen and only son, for no reason at all. There the boy Dhruva and his mother had to live among wild animals and savage men. The next thing that the King did was worse still. He married a very harsh young woman named Yuvati. It was she who inspired him to do most of his meanest deeds.

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Under her guidance the King took to the most destructive of sports: war, plunder and massacres. Wherever Yuvati and the King sent out their armies, cities were sacked. Every sign of civilisation was turned into desert. If there was a man in the whole of India who criticised Yuvati and the King, his



Dhruva advanced into the deeper jungle

head was cut off without delay. War and fear became the rule of people's life.

Year by year as Prince Dhruva grew in his forest home nothing save stories of his father's evil acts reached his ears. Evil and nothing but evil Dhruva and his mother heard for years. Not even a blade of grass could be made to whisper anything good about the wicked King.

Naturally this made both of them heartsick. So when he was twelve years old, one day Dhruva asked his mother, "How can we rid India of so much cruelty?"

The good queen said, "Let us go to the monastery of the Seven Wise Men who live near here and ask their advice."

That day, sword in hand, leading his mother, Dhruva advanced into the deeper jungle where the sages lived. He battled with wild tigers, and tested his bravery against sinister monsters. He conquered everything that opposed him. After he had defeated all the savage beasts, at the long last, he reached the homeland of the Seven Sages.

They received the noble prince and his mother with great kindness and offered them one of their cottages for shelter. The cottage had floors of ruby and walls of jade. Its roof was shingled with sapphire and carnelian. Though it was a wild place, the prince and his mother lacked nothing of comfort. The sages being masters of magic, whatever their two guests needed was supplied instantly by beautiful fairies who lived on terms of great friendship with the men.

The next day at daybreak the seven men told the queen and her son this: "The King who has banished you here has become so wicked that God in Heaven is troubled by his evil deeds. God will destroy him, if you, Dhruva, do not pray to Him for mercy. Will you pray for your father in order to preserve him from God's wrath?"

The prince answered, "Yes." From that day on Dhruva spent twelve hours out of twenty-four praying to the Almighty.

He said, "O God, do not punish my father," over and over again. "O All-merciful Creator, save my father."

In this manner, two years passed. But all the same no good came of it. The King went on behaving worse and worse. The tales of his evil deeds filled the world.

Just when he was about to sit down to prayer on his fourteenth birthday, Dhruva beheld a messenger of God descend before him.

The divine being said, "O noble prince, pleased by your prayers, God has refrained from punishing your father these two years. Now that the King has not mended his ways and gone on doing most sinister evil deeds, and since he has deeply wronged the Indian people, at sundown today God will destroy him."

On hearing these words Dhruva's heart sank within him. "I want to save my father. Tell me, how can I save him?" he begged the celestial being.

The messenger answered: "Fly hence to your father's court and plead with God there. For the Almighty is there now." After speaking his last words the Deva, god, disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

Without delay Dhruva informed his mother of the King's

coming doom. She then hastened with him to the place where the seven old men lived. The prince described to them what the god had said. Dhruva's words went to their heart. The sages agreed with him and his mother: "We must try to save the King's life. And that without delay. Let us go to him."



"But how?" The queen explained, "It is six months' journey from here to my husband's court. How can we arrive there today?"

"That is easy," the sages said. "By our magic power we shall transport you to the King's court. In a few minutes we shall turn out a chariot by magic. Then the seven of us will become winged horses and pull it to the door of the royal palace before the sun sets."

No sooner had they said the words than the whole thing took place. Lo, in another moment's time the prince and his mother were flying through the air. They out-raced all the winds of Heaven. They caught up with the sun, then passed it. Lo, speed shamed by their flight fled and hid itself in the hills. Thus the chariot of wizardry sped to its goal.



They caught up with the sun

Just before sunset the wicked King saw a strange sight. He perceived walking through an army of courtiers seven half-naked old men, leading a boy and a woman towards his throne. Without anybody's permission, like a plough through the earth, they came past robes of bejewelled courtiers and noblemen.

"We have hastened here to save you from the wrath of

God," said the Seven Sages. "These are your son and wife."

The King grew livid with anger: "How dare you come near me?" he shouted. "I banished them from my presence. Begone, you old fools. Remove that boy from here. Take that woman out of my sight."



"I will silence your insolent tongue"

Now Dhruva pleaded on bended knees: "O my father, have pity on yourself."

But the King shouted: "Pity? How dare you utter such a word in my presence. I know no pity. Begone ere I hack you and your mother to pieces with my sword."

Here the queen said: "My Lord, our son and I both beg you."

Once more Dhruva said, "I shall die in my effort to save you from God's wrath. It's God Himself who inspired me to come to you. Beware of God's anger!"

"There is no God," shouted the King, and then rushed at Dhruva with his upraised sword. "I will silence your insolent tongue."

That instant something unthinkable happened. The throne on which the King had been sitting turned into a living creature, half-lion and half-man. In one bound the animal's claws and terrible teeth buried themselves in the King's neck. Ere Dhruva could fling himself before the beast in order to save his father, the King torn in twain lay on the ground. He was dead.

Now his Soul released from his sinful body opened its wings. Like an iridescent bird it rose in the air, saying: "The hand of God has slain me. He who is slain by God attains to Paradise. Sorrow not for me, O my son. Death inherits my body. My immortal soul goes with God."

In another moment the monster that had killed the King became a being of dazzling beauty and splendour, and said, "O Dhruva, you have done the duty of a son more faithfully than you know. Were it not for your prayers, I, God, would not have come to earth to slay the King. Because of your prayers, I the Supreme slew his body in order to save your father's soul from Hell. He who dies stricken by Me

goes to Heaven. Though your prayers could not save the King's body, they saved his soul."

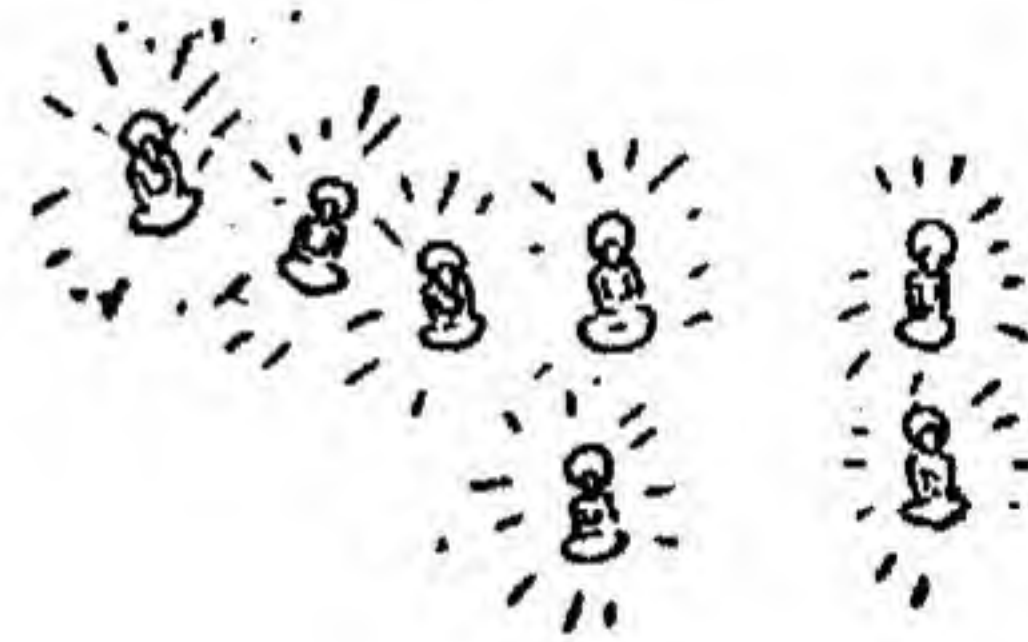
Now the thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and streams of stars began to dance before the courtiers. Borne on a thousand diamond-throated clouds hymned by ten thousand gods, the Lord of the world was carried into Heaven.

In time Dhruva became the King of all India. He was a good King. He put an end to wars. He founded schools where his father had erected dens of evil. Instead of war he had peace taught to all children. In forty years' time, there was not a man living in his Kingdom who ever heard of war and robbery. Of course, the reason why he succeeded so well lay in the wisdom of his seven wise men who served him as his ministers of state. Their wise advice and clean work made Dhruva's success sure.

Long after his mother's death, when Dhruva passed out of this world those seven great men went with him. But instead of becoming invisible souls, God made them visible in order to remind men and women what they did a long time ago. Any clear night when you look at the sky, you will find Dhruva, the Pole Star, and the seven stars of the Big Bear smiling upon you. If you think a little you can make out what they are saying to you. God speaks through them. He says, "O men, learn to live and rule yourselves wisely. Live without war and hate as did these seven wise men and their friend,

Dhruva. Hold no traffic with evil. The name of the Pole Star, Dhruva, means loyalty to the good."

Now you know, O reader, why the Hindus call the lodestar, Dhruva, and the seven stars of the Dipper, Seven Sages.





X

HOW THE SEA WAS TURNED SALTY

IN THE beginning God made the ocean sweet. That is why not only men and beasts but also those mammoths of Heaven, the clouds, used to drink from it.

The occasion which changed its sweetness into the bitter taste of salt was very sad. It took place a few hundred years after the Almighty had created mankind, whose one trouble was unhappiness. Men seemed to make themselves unhappy very easily.

Because all men are never happy at the same time, God took the human form and sought to help them with His own example. He wanted to prove to all mankind the perfection of the average man.

Because He was residing in a human body, God was

tainted with three great weaknesses of man—thirst, hunger, and anger. In every other respect He remained All-good and pure. What His triple weakness cost the world the following fable will tell.

Now that He was a man, he was called the Monk Bull-head. He was very obstinate. As soon as he had decided to help mankind to become happy all at the same moment, he sat down to think that thought. For a man's thought, if it is strong and good, can influence other men to do right. Bull-head kept repeating in his mind, "All mankind will be happy for a while, very soon."

Hour after hour, day after day, he held that one sentence in his heart and head. Soon he forgot both hunger and sleep. He was very eager to make the human race blissful.

Though he could do without food and sleep, Bull-head could not avoid being thirsty. Twice a day, every sunrise and sunset, a terrible thirst seemed to scorch his throat. He failed to meditate well because his dry throat dragged his mind away from his thought. Instead of the happiness of mankind, he began to think of oceans of sweet water. At last it came to pass that he had no other thought, but how to quench his thirst. He dreamt of springs, rivers, and seas all the time.

Unable to bear his thirst any more, suddenly he opened his eyes. That instant he beheld not far off the blue-black

sea. Its sweet water was flecked with "lightning-throated" clouds. Instead of going to it, he ordered the sea to come to him. But the sea felt so gay playing with the clouds that it paid no heed to Bull-head's call. Clouds like lions of crystal roared and ran from the charging sea. The waters ran up the



The holy one called again

sapphire battlements of the sky. . . . But the clouds played on, skipping over its emerald shoulders every time it raised its hands to catch them by their snow-shaming mane.

The holy one called again. This time too the playful water heeded him not. Now he beheld that the clouds had put a

chain of blue flame around its wrists—a rainbow. The sea rose and surged like a boiling cauldron till it broke its shackles smiting the horizon into myriad iridescences.

The holy man called for the third time. The sea failed to answer. She was too busy chasing the clouds at bay in a corner of the sky. This made him angry. From Bull-head his imperfection, anger, rushed forth. He shook with rage. He



This was the beginning of the tides

ceased to be a man athirst. Instead God's Anger spoke through him. He said: "I curse you to become as salty as the tears of those unhappy men for whose good I came to earth."

That instant the rushing waters of blue put on shrouds of foam, white as the moon. The very heart of them turned salty. Now they wailed with sorrow and rushed landward to the ascetic's feet. This was the beginning of the tides. They

wept and pleaded with Bull-head. And the whole world wept with them.

They prayed to him, "You are All-powerful. Whatever you say becomes real. We beg you to make us sweet again. Make us sweet so that our playmates, the leopards, lions, and elephants of the sky will come to drink of us again."

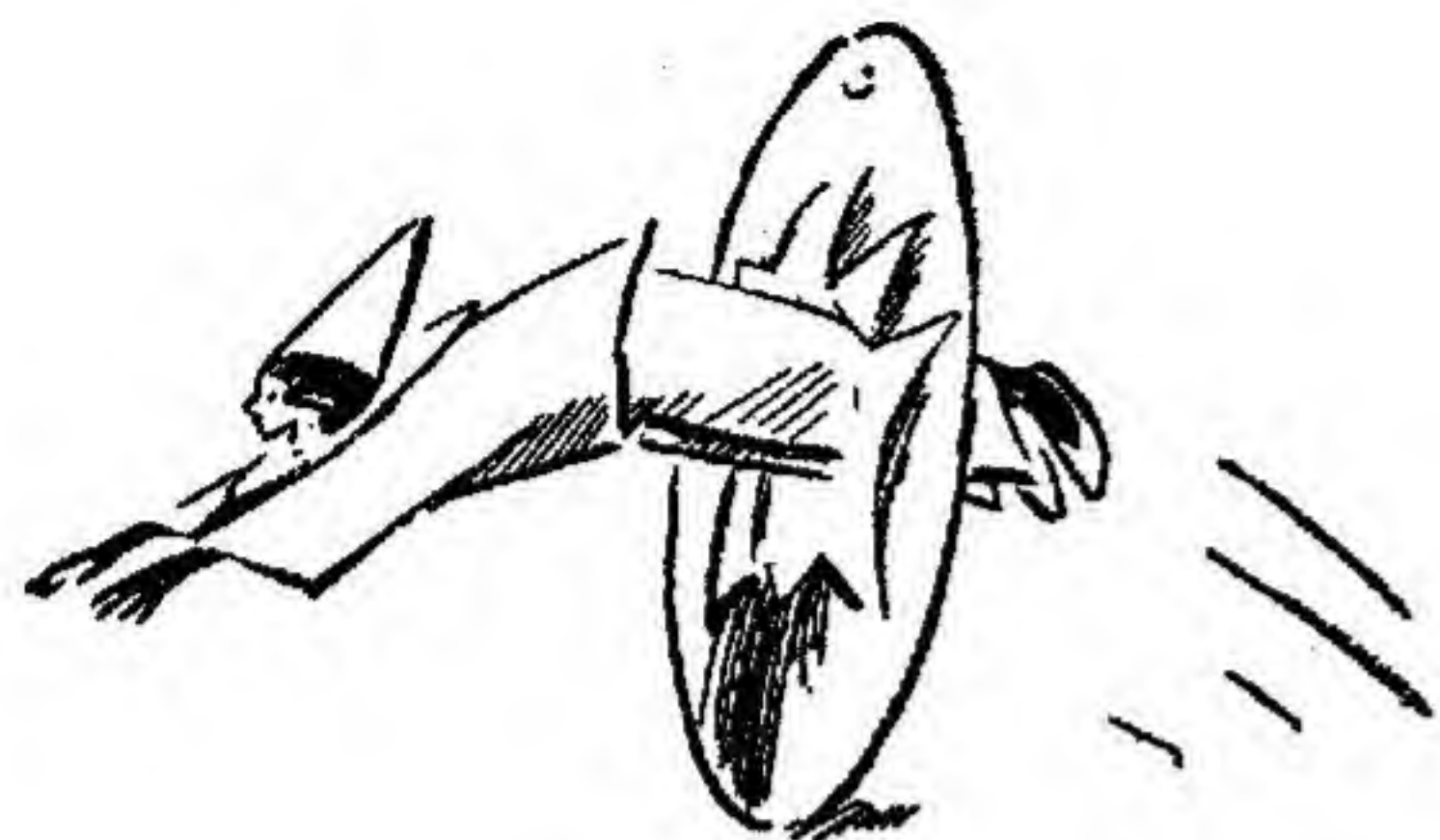
Now the holy man realised what he had done. In his anger he had turned the greatest quencher of thirst as useless as a desert. He too was stricken at heart. "What have I done in my anger!" he exclaimed again and again. "Now I know how powerful men's imperfections are. . . ."

A strange thought came to his mind. Now he said to the wailing sea: "You will turn sweet when I drink of you. . . . Do not rejoice, no, not yet, O noble waters. I will punish myself now for having lost my temper. . . . I am tortured terribly by my thirst. I will not drink until you are sweetened. And this will take place when all men become happy for a single moment. That instant you will regain your lost sweetness. Begone now! Come hither from day to day bringing me report of men's doings. The day all men become blissful I will drink of your salt in order to turn you sweet."

From that day every few hours the ocean sends up tides that whisper to the praying Bull-head about men's advance in happiness. Alas they say, "Not yet, not yet have all men become happy. Maybe in a thousand years' time thy prayers, O Bull-head, will turn humanity happy."

Thus the tides ebb and flow around the world. Every time they rush up to the land they whisper: "Not yet. Not yet." You who have heard this story should try to make yourself and other men happy in order to free the ocean of its unnatural taste.





XI

THE CLOWN OF PARADISE

LEANING between the diamond turrets of Heaven, two young gods beheld the clown on earth below. They were pleased and thrilled by him. Though a mortal he did tricks that no immortal had ever seen. For instance, he jumped off the ground, then turned over and over six times in the air, then landed on his feet. No matter what he did, that fellow never came down on his head. He did three somersaults in the air when he jumped sideways, and yet he landed on his feet. What a clown!

Last of all he did his crowning act. He literally leaped off the ground and landed on a tree with the agility of a bird.

Of course, after they had seen the clown, the two gods went straight to the golden throne of the Father of all, and

THE CLOWN OF PARADISE

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begged: "O Lord, our God, Master of the Universe, just now we saw one called Clown on earth give pleasure to thousands of human beings at a bazaar in the open. He pleased us too. As you know, Omniscient Father, we pray you to bring Clown to Heaven who will amuse us."

Thus having prayed, the two gods rose to their feet. God, who knows all things, secret and hidden, was pleased to hear of Clown whom He had created twenty years ago. Though He knew all of Clown's work, yet the words of the little gods seemed like new. So in order to see with human eyes the Almighty disguised Himself as a boy athlete and knocked at Clown's door.

The poor fellow was quite flustered to find a lad dressed in fine silk at the entrance of his humble hut of thatch and mud. Bowing low before his guest, Clown asked: "Your Highness is probably the son of our King. What can I have done to deserve your visit?" In his excitement he even forgot to give the boy a seat.

The latter, however, having entered the house squatted on its floor. When Clown too had seated himself, the radiant one said: "A rumour is abroad that you are the best acrobat on earth. It is likely that even the gods in Heaven lean over its parapet to see your work. It amuses them exceedingly. Have you thought of going thither in order to tumble before God?"

The snub-nosed face of Clown with its beadlike eyes put

on an expression of utter dumbness. He was stupefied. But all the same, since he had to say something in answer to his noble guest, he mumbled, "Yes."

The boy said further: "But it is not easy to go to Heaven. You can not jump to Paradise, you know."

The embarrassed Clown made some more noises in his throat. But since his guest did not seem to grasp what he had tried to say he made a great effort to speak clearly. "Can you



"What can I have done to deserve your visit?"

tell me what I must overcome in order to go up there?"

The lad gave him this information: "You must be able to do your tricks without expecting any income or praise from

your spectators. And last of all you should be able to do as good work when you are hissed at as when you are praised."

"Why, my Lord?" asked Clown very quietly.

He was told that in Heaven the gods neither praise, nor blame, so if Clown expected to be with the gods he had better overcome his love of praise and fear of blame.

But being a man of poor brains, Clown said: "Oh, that is easy for me. I am never downcast by blame, nor elated by praise. But may I ask, who are you? Why do you come here to my house to talk thus, O noble youth?"

The boy laughed and answered, "It is not necessary that I should tell you who I am. In a month's time you shall prove before the world whether you can do your work without praise. Farewell."

After the lad had taken his leave, Clown lay on his bed and began to think. His mind just hummed with ideas. All of them centered on one prayer: namely, "May I be pure enough to do without praise."

Thinking so he fell asleep. It seemed to his dreaming spirit that the boy who had visited him a while ago now became bright as the sun flooding everything with His light.

Next day in the big bazaar of holy Benares where hundreds of Hindus dressed in ochre, amber and sapphire had assembled, the clown spread his rug in order to tumble. He reversed the usual order of his programme. Not only that,

but he made a speech to the crowd which ended with the sentence: "It will not bother me in the least if you do not praise my antics."

Thinking he had spoken enough, he began to do his tricks. The assembled multitude neither applauded nor hissed. Trick after good trick followed. Alas, some more silence greeted his ears. No praise from a single member of his audience! At the finish, when he tumbled six times in the air, some one hissed him. This cut him to the quick. . . . It made him so



He made a speech to the crowd

angry that he cursed the audience. Now in order to stop himself from going insane with anger he ran home, then burst into tears.

After crying had eased his heart, he dried his eyes. Just then, he sensed the presence of someone in the room. There

stood before him the noble youth of yesterday. This brought Clown only a greater sense of pain.

The lad said, "Habit makes character. Build new habits slowly. They will give you the character that will take you to Paradise. If you form the habit of being above praise and blame God will bless you."

After having spoken in the above manner the boy strode out of the house. Clown though homesick for some person to chat with, decided to stay by himself in order to meditate upon the words of his strange guest.

The next day when he went to perform before the pilgrims, he failed miserably. Just could not do anything well. Every trick that he tried to turn went wrong. The entire crowd made fun of him.

In a week's time the populace not only ceased to come to his performance, but forgot his very existence. Now there was not a soul who spoke with him save the marvellous youth who seemed to happen in whenever Clown felt too miserable. The boy repeated one sentence every time he called, "Remember, O tumbler of Heaven, there are two ways that men have of killing a man's spirit: by neglect or by praise. Rise above either of these. The true artist never permits himself to be caught by them."

Those words were not so very comforting; yet somehow they made the wretched tumbler happy. As soon as he could, he left Benares and went to another holy city, Allahabad,

where four million people had assembled for a festival called Kumbha. Here snake charmers and fakirs had come from all over India to perform, and to get rich. You could really see magicians swallow swords as if they were sugar candy, or, put knives through their own hearts without hurt. Last of all some magicians were buried alive and were dug out half a day later none the worse for it. As for common tricks like dancing on sharp edges of swords and walking on fire, they were done at every street corner where pilgrims appeared in groups. . . .

In one corner our Clown too turned his tricks. Fortunately for him, since the people of Allahabad were not acquainted with his past, they expected very little of him. Naturally whatever he did, did not displease them. In fact, he pleased them all. Since what he performed he did with perfect peace of heart nothing went wrong.

Day after day from the fifteenth of January till mid-February he performed at the Allahabad festival. At last when it was over, he started back for his native city of Benares. And on the road twice he met his friend, the strange youth. The boy said to him: "You have begun right. You have performed a long time now without fearing a person who hisses and without fawning before the one who praises. Good! Now go to Benares to do your most difficult feat."

One day in Benares some people suddenly recalled the fact that they had a clown. There were others who thought

that he was not worth while any more. There was a group most disheartening of all. They were the bored young boys and girls. They said to one another in their club one day: "If that fool returns to Benares, we shall stone him to death. He was a worthless tumbler . . ."



He started back for his native city of Benares

That instant a stranger appeared in their midst. Though he was a young man, he seemed to be vested in glory; and from his eyes and mouth radiated that something which men in their poverty of words call divinity. Facing the assembled young men and women of the club, he said: "You have in

your midst the greatest clown of history. You can keep him or lose him. What do you prefer? It is easy to lose him, for he is wanted in a place far, far better than Benares. If you do not praise him, he is bound to go away for good."

Suddenly the strange presence vanished from the club of the Bored Youths who felt angry at the stranger.

As if they had been insulted singly and together they all decided to go to the clown's open-air booth and laugh at him the following morning.

The next day since they did not rise early the older people who went to the clown's performance were without any malice. They were thrilled with their Clown and praised him, without stint. All this time the tumbler said to himself, "Beyond praise and blame; beyond fame and dishonour. I am doing all this not for myself; but for that radiant boy. I dare not disappoint him. He must be pleased if I do not notice either hissing or clapping of hands."

Now that the day had advanced the bored young men and women had reached the clown's booth. As if a lot of animals had come in human disguise, some of them mocked the performer by croaking like frogs; some screamed like little monkeys, some hissed like serpents, and the rest called him, "Fraud," no matter what he did. They kept on barking "Fraud, fraud, fraud."

But Clown heard none of them, nor saw their faces. He

seemed to fix his eyes on someone seated a little above the audience, and tried to do his work before that being.

First he tried a long jump and failed. All the audience hissed and cursed him. But somehow they failed to hurt his feelings. He did the second item of his programme very well: he jumped sideways, turned three somersaults in the air, then landed on his feet.

Now some people applauded, but most of them hissed, croaked, and howled. Undeterred by praise and blame he did the six somersaults in the air. For this the praise seemed very weak. Then as he started to do his thousand handsprings something happened. He fell limp to the ground.

This gave the bored young men and women their great chance. Again and again they called him: "Fraud." As if the rest had come to have the same opinion, the whole audience repeated in unison, "Fraud, fool, fraud, fool, fraud, fool!"

Jeers and hisses had no effect on Clown. Since no one came to his aid, he slowly raised himself on one foot. Now the spectators could see that he had sprained his ankle, but instead of sympathy they showered curses on him.

"Out with him," they shouted. "Get out of our city. Go to Heaven, if you like, but get out, you old bungler."

Somehow not a word of their abuse reached the tumbler's ears.

"Ah," Clown said to himself, "I can not jump with this

broken ankle of mine, yet I must, I must do my last trick. For the one person, that boy, wants me to try it."

In spite of excruciating pain, he stepped forward, then crouched. By now the crowd had done with words and had



On and on he soared

taken to casting stones at him. In order to avoid being stoned to death, he leaped above the flying missiles. . . . It seemed as if tons of pain like real weight were dragging his body down! Nevertheless, ere his feet had touched earth once more he leaped anew.

Before the assembled multitude could say another evil word against him, he passed above their heads, and with the agility of a bird landed on a tree near by. Even there a stone came flying at him. He leaped higher and dodged it successfully. But, lo, instead of coming down on his feet he flew past the sky-line of the houses. And still he went. On and on he soared, like an eagle in the sky.

Just then the audience below burst out into applause. A tremendous shout of praise rent the air. It was deafening. But Clown heard none of their tumultuous call of "Sadhu, well done." His attention was held by something else. His eyes examined the heavens carefully—more than twice. He looked and listened carefully. He seemed to follow the lead of another being soaring Heavenward.

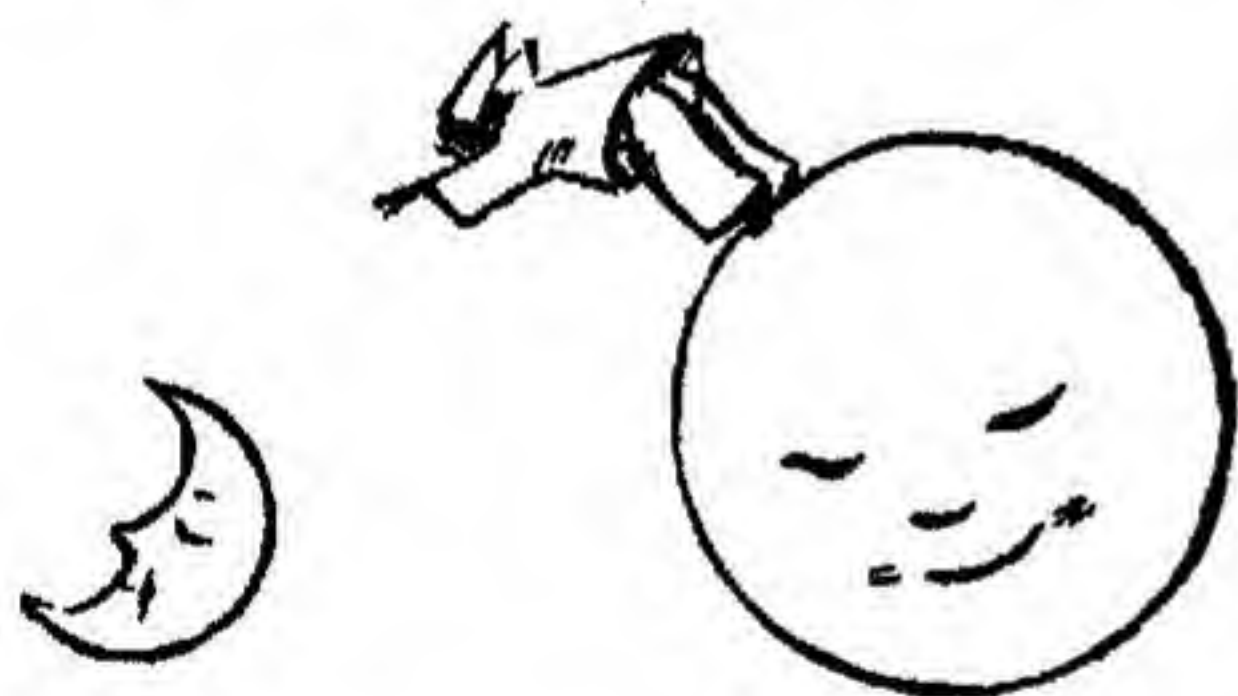
Yes, he *had* seen that lad! There, he was *there* already, leaning on the diamond parapet of Heaven smiling. "I must reach him," he said to himself. That instant Clown flung himself upwards with greater zest. Fiercely he tore his way through the clouds. Instead of landing on a comet for rest, he shoved his head through the stars, scattering them like pebbles. Thus he passed higher and higher, past the empty ether. . . . Then alighted before the throne of God.

As if he had never been anywhere else all his life, he found himself at home before the Lord, and felt healed of all pains.

He, the Almighty, for the fraction of an eyelid's fall took on the appearance of the boy, whom our friend had seen on earth so often.

But Heaven is a miraculous place. Ere Clown had recognised the boy, his eyes beheld the glory of God in which his friend's face was magnified.

Now they have a clown in Heaven who tumbles from the sun to the moon to give pleasure to the younger gods. Even there, no matter how they praise him, Clown has no ear for it.



THE END